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Portrait — DR. LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

RECORD NOTES & REVIEWS - OVERTONES

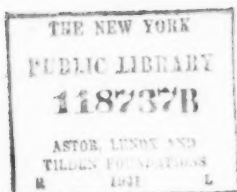
COLLECTORS' CORNER - SWING MUSIC NOTES - ETC.

Edited by
PETER HUGH REED





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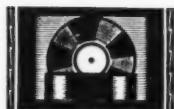


THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

All Worthwhile Recordings Reviewed

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Frontispiece: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present
No. 31 — Dr. Leopold Stokowski

THE MINORITY AND TSCHAIKOWSKY

PAUL ROSENFELD

It is uncertain how much of a celebration Tschaiakowsky's centenary will receive in these chaotic times. In this country we know that one or two periodicals plan to recount the familiar tales about the composer. It is not, however, Mr. Rosenfeld's intention to do so here. But in seizing the opportunity of the centenary to utter a discordant note, to state the minority opinion of Tschaiakowsky's art, Mr. Rosenfeld would like it known that he is not among those who never loved Tschaiakowsky's music at all; he would like it known that he is one of those who "loved and lost." Much, he feels sure, will therefore be forgiven him. Hence the introduction of his short page of autobiography.—Editor.

I SAT IN THE MAIN SCHOOLROOM, READING *The Picture of Dorian Gray* under cover of a Cicero held open on my desk, wondering what in the story made people say it was immoral. The door to the Head Master's office suddenly swung out. Major—so the Head Master was called (ours was a military school)—stood in the aperture. With an arm extended in my direction and a crooked forefinger he beckoned me to his court.

"Who is Emmeline Sartorius?" he demanded as tremulously I faced him over his table-top. A crisp telegram lay spread on it.

"She's my uncle's housekeeper."

He took up the yellow slip. "There seems to be trouble in your home," said he in passing to me. The telegram ran "Come at once. Your uncle ill and wishes to see you. Emmeline Sartorius."

Words refused to quit my lips. Amazingly, Major turned a key in his side-drawer and drew forth a five-dollar note. This also he handed me, commanding in a tone unusually gentle, "Go to your room and change to citizen's clothes. Report back in twenty minutes. There'll be a cab to take you to the station for the 11:15. I'm hoping the situation is not a serious one."

Almost sorry for Major, I smothered a shout. At that moment the glance he narrowed on me from small blue eyes seemed to betray misgivings. With presence of mind I mumbled "Thank you, sir!" and fled the office.—Lumberingly the hack descended the dank streets of the Hudson River town. The train was in motion as I boarded her: on the way to a seat I was surrounded by a radiant realization that the dreamt-of was happening, my thoughtfully planned strategem perfectly succeeding. I was en route to the Philharmonic; not so much the snow-bright riverscape as a dusky vision of the interior of Carnegie Hall floated before my eyes, flooded about my own inconspicuous but central figure with delight about to be mine. But New Hamburgs and Wappingers Falls, whose existence my sixteen years had not suspected, popped up along the line between Poughkeepsie and New York. Too affable, the locomotive visited with each one of them. Rapture gave way to nervousness. At last, a surprise—the Palisades; and, even more incredible, the ruby tenements of Harlem; and by God's graciousness, Grand Central.—Hurrying into the temporary concourse I spied behind the rope stretched to prevent persons awaiting passengers from leaping on them, a slight, familiar figure. It was the southern boy who'd preceded me to New York to see his family on its way abroad, and had obligingly sent the telegram, signed with the name of Miss Sartorius, I'd carefully written out for him. Glum at my thanks he remarked, "What do you suppose they'll do with us when they find out?"

"Oh—bounds, I suppose. They don't fire you when you've a good record. Come on along! It's the greatest piece of music ever written!"

Lugubriously he called after me, "Be a good fellow: keep my name out if you can!"—The Broadway car crawled through the

Tschaikowsky
about 1890



clamor and commotion that was New York. But in the lobby of the blind brown pile the queue before the box-office was short. Tickets in those 1906 or '07 pre-Barbirolli days were always on hand for Philharmonic concerts; and clutching one I climbed the steep ascent to "heaven" and reached my seat. In the nick of time! Tiny on the platform, apparently hundreds of feet below, the musicians were holding their instruments; and bursts of applause accompanied the passage through the forest of music racks of a tall, portly, patrician figure with silvery, close-cropped hair and beard. Upon the podium, the personage commandingly raised two hands innocent of any stick—and I awoke to the fact that out of smoky aural darkness close to the band a sound almost imperceptibly, and wearily and hopelessly was emerging. In gloom surpassingly satisfactory, bassoon-tones slowly sought to drag themselves up a scale, and sank back; till of their repeated and defeated effort was born, unpredictably sumptuous in the lower strings, the deep harmonic groan I dearly loved. Wavelike there swept over me the piece most magical of all in the repertory of the pianola of my uncle and guardian, the symphony "pathétique," with a passion, a mournfulness, a grief attained not even by Beethoven's admired similarly-named sonata. Woodwinds were sighing forth their knowledge of days of pain, unmitigated pain. Cello-notes despondently drooped to the region of velvet blackness. Instantly the conductor threw a gesture to the first violins. They growled. Their threat spread to other choirs. Storm brewed in the whole muttering orchestra. A most imperious gesture of the arm: the tempest broke. Embattled phrases reared their heads; proud, proletarian, half-Asiatic. Shrieking fiddles and stammering horns ran up storm-signals, rang third fire alarms. Frenetically the two voices in the texture hurled defiance back and forth between them. My awareness passed in ecstasy.

Friends: the "funeral of the grandmother" of the office-boy, *his* perennial pretext for a half-holiday, takes place, it is well-known, at the ball-grounds. The "sickbed of the uncle" of *this* precious pupil of a military school was, however, the balcony of Carnegie Hall on a day when Vassily Safonoff put the *6th Symphony* of Tschaikowsky through the paces of one of his sensational readings.

* * *

The opinion I shall doubtless gracefully but very earnestly present now, at a time customarily devoted to panegyrics, I take to be that of persons like myself once upon a time

subjugated by the Russian's music before some of it began boring and some of it repelling them. Perhaps in them too this judgment rather suddenly emerged after years of familiarization naturally had rubbed some of the power of shock and surprise from the Tschaikowsky scores: years in which the work of other, more complex, lyric symphonists had excited predilection—Brahms for example, or César Franck; and Muscovites more barbaric, dissonant and "modern," certainly more virile, than the great Russian weeper had swum into ken: the enchanted Borodin, Moussorgsky the objective, Rimsky of the delectable instrumentation. A performance of one of the temporarily half-forgotten old Tschaikowsky favorites, or an encounter with one of his less frequently given pieces may have precipitated the new view. And, lo—consciousness of dissatisfaction with the music sharply had put in its appearance. Possibly the hollowness and bareness of some passages had grown plain. The recapitulations of the singing, oftentimes strong and conjunct themes and other materials may have tired the mind with their nudity of the elaborations to which other symphonists had accustomed. Not only was Tschaikowsky's treatment of his material evidently almost exclusively homophonic. Almost entirely it wanted the gradual and subtle structural changes which in the recapitulation sections of the symphonies of other composers facilitate a progressive, ever-more-varied experience. Here by way of alteration was

chiefly decoration in the form of wreathing figures, oftentimes for woodwind, and dynamic amplification. And the quantity of the recapitulations, the persistent reiterations! Truly this composer, one said to oneself, did not flatter his audience's intelligence with his five-and six-fold repetitions of every point he made!—Or possibly a sudden desire to crawl beneath the chair had been provoked by the “soarings,” the hysterical aspiration of one of the sequences—the passages of phrases repeated several times, each time on a level a semitone above the last—whose formula Tschaiowsky would seem to have derived from Gounod, and somewhat simply favored. Or by the unconstrained, oftentimes excessively sentimental unbosomings, and thick-coming climaxes. Or by the luridness of the means of surprise, and loud and unabashed self-pityings.

Whatever the cause, there had come into being the core of the opinion of the minority which today finds itself equally in opposition to a public without repugnance for the number of performances currently bestowed on Tschaiowsky's music, and to Strawinsky and his coterie which considers this Russian still underrated and too infrequently performed. Curiously similar to the opinion the critical world long since has formed of the poetry of Byron—Byron in whose train Tschaiowsky followed and whose *Manfred* inspired a melancholy program-symphony in him—, this minority view embraces the fecundity and frequent brilliance of the composer's ideas and at the same time finds Tschaiowsky's art like that of the equally gifted Byron, coarse of grain, and excessively sentimental. In the music as in the verse the minority perceives the inevitably inferior result of an extreme instance of “excitation over personal feelings and passionate enthusiasm for personal passions unequilibrated by an interest in the patterns which might be made of such emotions and experiences through their extension and completion in something disinterested and impersonal.”

An intense interest in personal emotions less as material than as the center of value, our minority of course concedes to have been a characteristic of all the great musical romantics—Schubert, Chopin, Schumann—quite as much as of their literary brethren and predecessors. Their effort was directed toward the generation of musical symbols of these personal experiences and passions; and the ability to escape from the emotional personality, to “see life steadily and see it whole” being the condition of attraction to the objective oper-

atic and epical symphonic forms, they were predestined to affinity with the forms compatible with the expression of subjective sentiment. These are the lyric opera and the lyric, autobiographic symphony. Only in Tschaiowsky's case this self-absorption would seem to have been obsessive to the unhappy degree where it convinces men that their own sorrows are more important than those of very life, and leads artists to produce over-blown and childish symbols of their experiences. Whether the homosexuality of poor Peter Ilytch exasperated his sense of self-importance, the minority finds an interesting question and one that must be allowed, since we cannot but suspect that the unsatisfactory existence necessarily the homosexual's must bring about progressive disequilibrium, selfishness, misanthropy. Certainly it views as striking the circumstance that our composer's earlier symphonies, thin as they prevailingly are, exhibit balanced and self-forgetful feeling to a greater extent than his relatively more substantial, individualized, powerfully troubling *Fourth, Fifth and Sixth*. What it does assume is the presence in Tschaiowsky as in Byron of fanatical temperaments which in epochs of religion might have caused these men to find a somber source of exaltation in religious ideas, and in an age of science and rationalism caused them to discover it in their individualities and personal triumphs and personal defeats.

Lock of Self-Discipline

Despite genius these artists could therefore not lift themselves into the regions of great art, which is impersonal, disinterested, self-contained. Subjection of their impulsive, restless activities of mind to any discipline, conception of fineness of workmanship, elaboration, plasticity and perfection of detail as intrinsically valuable ends, indeed were almost impossible for them. If poor Tschaiowsky didn't compose his operas like the Englishman some of his poetic narratives, “while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades,” he did throw off two thirds of *The Maid of Orleans* in a little over a fortnight, and all the other of his works in this genre “in feverish haste to embody his ideas and certainty of success” on which there naturally followed “disenchantment, tardy self-criticism and a haunting wish to re-model and re-make”. The qualities required for permanent favor even with the larger public could not inhere in such compositions for the stage, touching as were their lyric flow and elegiac feeling. True, *Eugene Oniegin* and *The Queen of Spades* still are beloved in Rus-

sia. Yet what distinguishes Russians from the rest of mankind if not their belief that *Eugene Oniegin* is a great opera? More loving care and conscientious workmanship would seem to have been spent on the main works for the concert-hall. It is a well-known fact that Tschaiakowsky in 1889 rewrote his *B-flat minor Pianoforte Concerto*, which Nicholas Rubinstein with just severity criticized in the year of its birth, 1874. But even in the best of the orchestral pieces the most careful finish and niceties of drawing and detail are rare; and capricious impulse oftentimes is reflected. Has it not been observed how little the clangorous anvil-chorus introducing the first *Pianoforte Concerto* (Oh, the unforgettably massive descents and reboundings of the arms of Teresa Carreño as she attacked the piece!) and the equally heroic fanfare initiating the *Fourth Symphony*, have issue in the bodies of the respective compositions? Irresponsibly they are displaced for the benefit of other materials and ideas. — As for the sentimentality, the exaggerated, not infrequently false feeling, the overblown symbols, the theatrical posturings—they would seem to be the progeny of selfishness.

* * *

That the minority for whom I've ventured to speak does not forget the release and the delight provided them by Tschaiakowsky in other days, will not be doubted. That its opinion by no means constitutes a rejection of his entire work, will be seen from the fact that I have found this judgment similar to the one the critical world has passed on Byron —and Byron, though he is not greatly read, maintains himself in classic English literature. What it recognizes as of enduring interest in the work of Tschaiakowsky may be no single piece as strong as the ironic, pathetic *Don Juan* of Byron, but rather the rare lyric fecundity characterizing the output of this man who adored Mozart, the gift that enabled him to transform his experiences into singing melodies in instances of a nobly veiled melancholy, a virginal tenderness and sensuousness, and to feel with supreme tact the harmonic color rightly matching his ideas. Among his pieces the minority finds entire works, like the *Pianoforte Trio* and the *Nutcracker Suite*, that triumph through sheer charm and fantasy. It knows ideas and pages in his work which in themselves would almost seem to insure the permanence of the particular compositions in which they figure: such for example as the theme of Slavic grace that commences *meno mosso* in the violins in the third movement of the *B-flat minor Pianoforte Concerto*, and its

development; or the jocund march-like theme started by the clarinets and bassoons in the second movement of the *Fourth Symphony*; or the *pizzicato* movement of the second of these all-in-all happy compositions. The eclectic style, with its mixture of Italian, German and Russian elements, that so irritated some of Tschaiakowsky's contemporaries; the somewhat cosmopolitan nationalism, a nationalism of the salon, in yellow perfumed gloves in the manner of Turgenev, the minority certainly does not find objectionable, and even is inclined to admire. And it perceives the sweep of certain symphonic movements like the first of the *Pathétique*; and appreciates the fact that not many composers, for all Tschaiakowsky's willingness to accept commissions, have turned out fewer works that didn't have "the sanction of their inner feelings," than he did. All this is merely insufficient to reconcile us to the pervasion of his music in the face of the fact that life is too short to justify occupation with anything but the finer, truer feeling.

Our minority at the same time is reconciled to the circumstance that for some years to come its view will be considered snobbish. Forces and conditions, it knows, will for a time conspire to maintain the disproportionate demand for Tschaiakowsky's music it considers so unfortunate. One of these *forces* is the sentimentalism of Anglo-Saxondom.* One of these *conditions* flows from the circumstance that the radio is beginning the musical education of ever broader levels of the population, almost in the words of Gertrude Stein "beginning and beginning and beginning again," and thus has constantly to maintain a sort of musical primary school in which the simple Tschaiakowsky fits perfectly as teacher. Yet these forces and conditions are not permanent; and it is possible to foresee the day when Tschaiakowsky will figure in the musical firmament as a comet which periodically trails its fire among the steadily burning stars.

* The editor in an article on Tschaiakowsky in the first issue of *The American Music Lover* [May, 1935—available] referred to the composer as Everyman's Musician. In part he said: "Is there an answer to some need, to some inner disharmony in Tschaiakowsky's sensual, plangent melodies, that makes people return to his music again and again? Anguish, self-pity, bitterness—people fight shy of revealing these traits. But the music is unabashed. It expresses them freely, fully. It was an outlet for Tschaiakowsky, and it is an outlet for the pent-up emotions of many others. In his music, people find satisfaction at these inner feelings being exploited on the "wings of song," for later they are lost in the recesses of pleasant retrospect."

PIANO MUSIC OF THE 20TH CENTURY

SOME NOTES AND A REVIEW

HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

AFTER SCHUMANN, CHOPIN AND LISZT came Debussy, Busoni, and Ravel. The first three began an epoch in piano music; the latter three virtually concluded it. Harmonic and stylistic differences there are in plenty, but there is an essential progression: Ravel is often not far removed from Liszt, while the figurations and treatment of the pedal in Debussy are the apotheosis of the Chopin tradition. Busoni imbibed all styles and stood on the threshold of the future. He is one of the links between the old and the new, but essentially he stems from the past.

Thus Busoni and Ravel—and, of course, many of their contemporaries—despite many startling innovations, represent the traditional spirit of twentieth-century music. But at the same time, new schools of composition were beginning to disturb the musical conservatives. The restless spirit of the new age gave impetus to the revolutionary ideas of a group of young composers, and early in the twentieth century the old order did not merely change—there was a seeming rupture. Musicians rushed in where angels feared to tread, and made themselves quite at home. Stravinsky and Schönberg preached polytonalism and atonalism, and their followers spread the doctrines far and wide. And since the theories were so unprecedented, it was inevitable that many composers should use them without a full knowledge of their principles. There were, of course, honest and sincere exponents

of the new music, but there also were many sensationalists who seized upon atonalism as a convenient harmonic device to mask any number of melodic sins. During the first two decades of the 20th century most composers went out of their way to make their music as forbidding and strange as possible. The great premium was on novelty; everything was "interesting." Henry Cowell was busy banging the piano with his elbows, and Leo Ornstein was dazzling the intelligentsia with his frenetic naturalism. A new philosophy of piano composition arose. Overboard went the Liszt and Chopin traditions, and the percussive possibilities of the instrument began to be explored. Decoration and figuration, key signature and bar lines were largely abandoned by the more radical schools, whose music was cerebral and unemotional bleakness and might. There were many glittering cults—now largely forgotten—and eager young men rushed to join them.

The result was an artistic confusion almost unparalleled in the history of music. It was obviously impossible to correlate the diverse schools, and experiments went on in a great many directions at once. Not that all was entirely unprecedented—Debussy had made the augmented eleventh eminently respectable and polytonalism can be traced back to Bach—but the musical approach was changed. Emotion of all kind was abhorred; the more serious composers shunned all forms of romantic suggestion, and the less serious brought irony and flippancy into their music. This was perhaps to be expected; George Dyson truly wrote that "a generation which expresses itself strongly is normally followed by one which prefers to be more wary," and it was natural that the reaction from romanticism should bring a sceptical attitude.

Today we look back and smile tolerantly, forgetting that the already moldy figures of that time may have furnished the background

* PIANO MUSIC OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY—DEBUSSY: *Nocturne in D Flat*; PROKOFIEFF: *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22, Nos. 10, 11, 15, 17, and 18; COPLAND: *Scherzo Humoristique—The Cat and the Mouse*; RESPIGHI: *Notturmo*; KRENEK: *Little Suite*, Op. 13a; SCHÖNBERG: *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19; played by Jesús María Sanromá. Victor set M-646, two 10-inch and two 12-inch discs, price \$7.00.

for the music of tomorrow. Minor and transitional figures often fill a dual function, and in the end it is usually what they were aiming at rather than what they hit that counts. It is a historical artistic fact that the greatest composers take what their predecessors have left and mold it into greatness. And if it happens that the music of the future will be atonal, the Ornsteins, Casellas, Barths, Varèses, and Tochs will be much more important than they are today. Thus it may well be that the theories of the 1910's and 1920's may be more important than the music then produced.

It is the absolute break from tradition that makes criticism so difficult. From Bach through the Stravinsky of *Le Sacre* there is a more or less continuous line. Thus critics had a basis for comparison upon which to work. But how can one criticize atonal music, for which there is no precedent? Fifty years from now we will do so, but today it is a foolhardy critic who dogmatically praises or condemns. Of course we can often tell the good from the insincere, and genius from charlatanism, but the important men—Schönberg, Hindemith, Kodaly, Bartok, Berg, to mention a few—have not yet settled into their historical places. One naturally has preferences; I for instance, think that composers like Hindemith, Bloch, and Bax have achieved a satisfactory fusion of intellect and emotion, and that men like Piston, Berezowsky, Haba, and Webern, as a rule, have not. But when it comes to modern music, likes and dislikes are *purely* subjective (not as in music of the past, where criticism can be based on objective principles), and I, for one, refuse to play Don Quixote to the windmills of modernism.

And now comes Victor with its album of twentieth-century piano music. Of the six composers, four can be classed as modernists—Prokofieff, Copland, Krenek, and Schönberg. The other two are included in the album because of their contributions to the style of present day piano music. As A. Veinus writes, in the notes to the set, "the value of the present compilation must rest upon . . . the intrinsic merit of the music and the fact that, despite the impossibility of complete representation, the music contained does exemplify important tendencies in the piano music of the last forty years."

Important tendencies, yes; but the intrinsic merit of much of the music may be questioned. The Debussy selection (a first recording) is an early and unimportant work; it is highly Chopinesque, with only a few interludes suggesting the Debussy of the future. Respighi's



Notturmo (a first American recording) strikes me as being shallow and artificial. Stylistically and pianistically it is a throwback to Liszt in his mellow moments, and it hollowly echoes the methods and techniques of a past age. There is a pseudo-nocturnal effect, but it is as transparent as the Emperor's new clothes in Andersen's tale. Of such is decadence in music. We are already familiar with the Prokofieff *Visions Fugitives*, recently recorded by the composer himself (Victor set M-477). Of the five that Sanromá plays, four can be found in the Prokofieff album. This seems an inexplicable duplication, especially since the composer has written so many other enjoyable works for piano.

With the other selections I find myself on more uncertain ground. I am not impressed with the musical content of the Copland work, although it is very pianistic. The title suggests a program, and I suppose that there is humor and irony in the piece. At any rate it is healthy, natural, and uninhibited. Far different is the facile and sophisticated Krenek suite. An early work, it is not typical of the uncompromising atonalist of today. It was written shortly after the war, and jazz elements are instantly apparent. Nobody would call it great music; on the other hand, few would be so serious-minded as to dismiss it scornfully, despite the apparent banalities.

The above works are more or less orthodox in idiom, and can be weighed by objective principles of criticism. The Schönberg pieces are music of a different order. It is the only work that adheres to Krenek's definition of atonality as "a musical language in which elements of a dissonant nature prevail almost exclusively, while the syntactic means of the dominant function are absent." Melody, harmony, and form as we know it are non-existent; the treatment is not pianistic but percussive, and one feels that it could have been written for any group of percussion instruments. There may be great utterances present; if so, they evade me, and all I can say is that I do not understand the composition. No doubt an elaborate theory motivated it, but it seems all theory and no emotion—and there never was great music without a combination of the two. Nor can the pianist be blamed if Schönberg does not emerge in poetic brilliance. Sanromá is perhaps the greatest living exponent of modern piano music, and his performances in this album are models of clarity, brilliance, and intelligence.

THE NEW SIBELIUS SOCIETY SET

SOME NOTES AND A REVIEW

SIBELIUS SOCIETY SET No. 6: *En Saga*, Op. 9 (discs 12614/5); *In Memoriam*, Op. 59 (disc 12616); *The Bard*, Op. 64 (disc 12617); *Pelléas and Mélisande—Suite*, Op. 46 (3 sides-discs 12618/9); *Valse Triste*, Op. 44 (1 side-disc 12619); and *The Tempest—Prelude*, Op. 109a (disc 12620); played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor set M-658, seven discs, price \$10.50.

■ The Tchaikowsky centenary this month has naturally focused the attention of many of us on his music. Approaching this album of Sibelius we are reminded of the Finnish composer's professed admiration for and discerning criticism of the Russian. Sibelius is quoted by his pupil de Törne as saying that Tchaikowsky "gives himself up to every situation without looking beyond the moment." To "look beyond the moment," de Törne points out, "is the essence of the epic, the broad symphonic outlook; it means thinking in perspective . . . Tchaikowsky's intensity

One truth is apparent: our present age is one of transition, with the composers trying to unite the loose ends of the many modern theories into an artistic and esthetic whole. There is no doubt that it will be accomplished, but as yet the composer who can do this has not appeared—at least, I have not heard him. In the meantime, there is much talk about dissonance and atonality, just as there was similar talk in Beethoven's, Schumann's, Wagner's, and Strauss' days. The results at present may be uncertain or negative, but our composers are struggling hard to produce great music that will be the true expression of a restless generation. Some may point out that the mountain labors and does not even bring forth a mouse, but let us not forget that the mountain in labor is an awe-inspiring spectacle. There always were theories; there always will be theories. And on the critical side, there always will be a Pangloss to let idle and unfounded speculations get the upper hand. In the end, the wisest procedure is to interrupt him as did Candide with an "all very well. . . but let us cultivate our garden."

excludes any measuring capacity, and his art culminates in his last symphony, that apotheosis of dejection and submission. Nothing can be more alien to the mind of Sibelius, even in his early period, than the spirit which dominates the *Symphonic Pathétique*. For although endowed by nature with a temperament of truly volcanic intensity he is never absorbed by any situation or episode to the detriment of the whole."

It is this breadth of vision in Sibelius that gives his music an enduring quality. In much of the music of his middle and later periods Sibelius is accused of austerity by those who are unfamiliar with his style. It is a curious fact that one's reactions to Sibelius' so-called austerity change very rapidly if one is submitted to a few repetitions of the music. The *Fourth Symphony* is a case in point, as is *En Saga*, to a lesser degree.

Cecil Gray has contributed a worthy booklet to this set, and Victor has wisely reprinted it in the American issue. Although one suspects that Gray is upon occasion inclined to

be overly enthusiastic about Sibelius and not as discerningly critical as he might be, one must admit that much he writes about the music has the ring of truth. He regards *En Saga*, composed in 1892, as a masterpiece; there are those who consider it an inferior work. My admiration for this music has never equalled my regard for the composer's fourth, sixth and seventh symphonies. It is, however, a work that in the hands of Toscanini, a Beecham, or a Koussevitzky, emerges as a great score. Beecham plays it here with superb poise, sweeping majesty, and rare poetic sensitivity. There is an aura of mystery about this music; it suggests a nebulous world from which emanates a strange tale. Gray says it "is the first large scale orchestral composition in the history of music in which we encounter the authentic voice and accent of the North." Gray may be correct; and indeed few would deny that it is a fine score. But he has written better. A previous recording of this work by Goossens was an abridged version; the present release is complete.

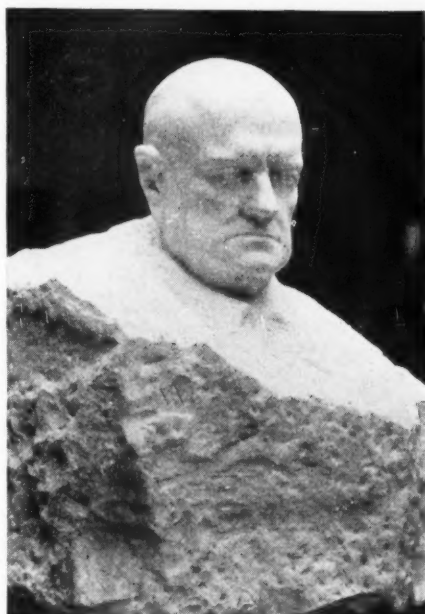
En Saga, according to Sibelius, was composed from youthful themes he had kept in sketchbooks. He once told de Törne that young composers should not be spendthrifts with the "themes and musical ideas of their youth, for they are the richest and best you will ever invent, and even if you cannot give them at once their definite shape, they will later on form the basis of some of your happiest compositions." Combined with the knowledge and experience acquired through a long career, these youthful themes, Sibelius contends, may result in a valued work. This would certainly seem to be true in the case of *En Saga*.

In Memoriam is a fine example of Sibelius' broad vision. It is a funeral march that sounds a universal note. Gray says that it is a work to be regarded as "inspired by the impersonal contemplation of, and meditation upon, the problem of death." Although composed in 1907-8, it could very well have been inspired by the recent Finnish catastrophe. A forceful and moving work, it may prove somewhat repellent at first; but since there is no manifestation of pity in its emotion—rather a tragic relentlessness that is as starkly real as it would seem to be inevitable—the music deserves to be better known.

The Bard, despite Gray's assertion that it is one of the composer's most important works and closely allied to his *Fourth Symphony*, impresses me less on a first hearing than the previous composition. This may well augur for greater appreciation in the end. How-

ever, the material is definitely "tenuous and disembodied" on first acquaintance, and despite the splendid playing and recording I am not convinced it was worth recording.

The incidental music that Sibelius wrote for a Scandinavian production of Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas and Mélisande* is far more interesting, particularly the moving *Death of Mélisande*. There are three excerpts played here—*Entr'acte* (No. 7), *A Spring in the Park* (No. 3), and *The Death of Mélisande* (No. 8). Sibelius' music has nothing in common with that by Debussy or Fauré; it is more robust and decidedly Nordic in character. The *Entr'acte* need not detain us; it is a genial



Jean Sibelius

and likeable little piece which was undoubtedly intended to enliven its hearers between acts. *A Spring in the Park* is atmospheric, and since it comes early in the drama it does not partake of tragedy. However, it has been pointed out that the composer, in the rising fifths in the middle section, has made thematic allusion to *The Death of Mélisande*. The latter piece is profoundly moving, and one of the most expressive compositions of its kind that has ever been written.

The reader may be interested to know that G. Schirmer, Inc., publish an album of ten piano pieces, which the composer himself arranged in 1910, under the somewhat ambigu-

ous title of *From the Land of Thousand Lakes*, or *Sibeliana*. The latter title was the one Sibelius sanctioned in the European edition. In this album the composer has included six of the incidental pieces from *Pelléas and Mélisande* and has given them different titles. For example, the *Entr'acte* will be found here under the title *Alla Gazotta*, and *The Death of Mélisande* is called *Sunset (Elegie)*.

L'alse Triste needs no comment. Gray gives us its program in his notes. Suffice it to say that Beecham's performance of it, like his performance of *Finlandia*, is the most delicately adjusted and affecting version on records.

The *Prelude to The Tempest* is picturesque music, ingeniously and effectively contrived. The storm assumes veritable hurricane proportions, and then suddenly ceases in a dramatic lull. There are no Wagnerian clichés in this storm. It is music of effect, and there is no actual thematic material from start to finish. The mood created by the sudden lull is a memorable one; it may well encourage repeated hearings for the sake of its recapitulation.

All of the above music has been splendidly recorded in a fashion that will not present any problem of reproduction to anyone, and, as intimated above, Beecham gives superb performances of every work. —P. H. R.

TWO LOUDSPEAKER MOUNTINGS

ROBERT S. LANIER

MORE INGENUITY HAS BEEN APPLIED TO the problem of mounting cone loudspeakers than to any other single aspect of sound reproduction in the home, and the results show a variety which is a clear measure of the unfinished nature of the business. The reasons for this, as pointed out in this department some months back, are: (1) that the tonal quality of cone loudspeakers is heavily dependent on the mounting; (2) that many methods of mounting loudspeakers have been tried or suggested, with no one of them having an absolutely final measure of superiority; (3) that the home constructor has found a rewarding field for

experimentation in the development of loud speaker mountings. Further generalizations on the loudspeaker "situation": certain methods which could be considered, for the time being, effective enough and cheap enough to be generally recommended, are patented by a particular manufacturer, and thus have a limited availability; other excellent methods are far too expensive and elaborate for the home constructor.

The music lover, however, has no cause to develop a loudspeaker-frustration complex, a complaint that threatens the majority of acoustic engineers at one time or another. Developmental work in the field is at a high pitch at the present time as there are several new commercial incentives to the improvement of loudspeaker systems. Meanwhile the home constructor has several good lines of approach. In this article two methods are described which will give results justifying the time and attention of serious amateurs.

One of the principles of cone loudspeaker mounting is the separation of sound waves from the front and back of the cone with a box or baffle. The reason for this is that a loss of bass occurs if the front and back waves are allowed to interfere completely with each other. The bass response can be further improved if the back wave is added to the front under controlled conditions. Another widely used principle is the *loading* of the cone with a confined column of air, that is, a column of air is held against the cone so that the speaker has a much greater mass to work against than unconfined air can offer. The efficient transfer of vibratory energy from one medium to another—that is, from loudspeaker cone to surrounding air—has been greatly facilitated by the discovery of the principle of matching the load, which is now fundamental in electrical and mechanical power design. Briefly, this design principle states that such energy is transferred with great difficulty unless the load, or *transferee*, has a mass comparable to that of the source of energy, or *transferor*. A cone loudspeaker operating into unconfined air has nowhere near this optimum relationship with the air, and is thus markedly inefficient, on the order of 3% to 5% for the average commercial speaker. This inefficiency is not important in a home reproducer, since the necessary excess of power is easily and inexpensively obtained from the home lighting circuit. However, by adding an air column that makes the speaker more efficient in the bass range, an easy method of increasing the bass response of the speaker is obtained.

Another fault of the cone loudspeaker, its tendency to a strong peak, or resonance, in the mid-bass, can also be minimized with properly designed loading. And finally, any loudspeaker enclosure worth the name must reduce to a low value the heavy "boom," or cabinet resonance, which is such an unpleasant accompaniment to reproduction on many commercial outfits.

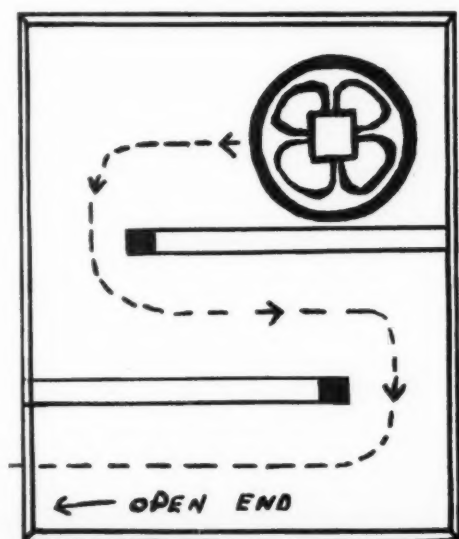
A form of mounting which combines separation of the front and back waves with loading to reduce the "primary," mid-bass resonance point, and to increase the efficiency of the speaker at its weaker points in the bass, is the now familiar labyrinth baffle. This consists of a folded air column held against the back of an enclosed speaker, the air column being open at its far end, and heavily lined with "damping," or sound-absorbing material. The effect of the air column, because of the mass of the confined air, is to oppose the resonance of the speaker, and to augment the bass response where it is weak with radiation from the open end of the tube. Cabinet boom and peaks throughout the speaker's range are materially reduced by the damping material. The final result of all this is a solid, clean-cut bass of better than average length that is very pleasing to a musically alert ear.

The simplest practical form which the labyrinth baffle can take is a flat box enclosure, upright on the long dimension. The outside dimensions for a typical tenor twelve-inch speaker might be as follows: height, three

feet; length, two feet six inches; depth, ten inches to a foot. The speaker should be placed in one of the upper corners, so that the folded conduit can lead directly away from the back of the cone. The accompanying drawing shows how such an enclosure would look with the back removed. The speaker is seen in the upper right corner, and the dotted line shows the path of sound waves from the back of the cone to the far end of the tube, at the floor level on the diagonally opposite corner. The plane of the tube opening is in the end of the enclosure, at right angles to the plane of the speaker.

The conduit itself is formed of horizontal partitions staggered as shown in the drawing to provide a back-and-forth path from the speaker to the opening. These partitions are made of thick bats of rock wool or other sound-absorbing material, supported by chicken wire, cloth, or strong cardboard. The outer box, and especially the face into which the speaker is fastened, must be of heavy plywood or celotex, strong enough to resist vibration from the speaker. The whole inner surface of the box, including the back, must be thickly lined with the rock wool. The vertical panels of rock wool can be held in place against the inside of the box with chicken wire or light netting cloth.

The critical dimension of this form of baffle is the length of the conduit, measured from the speaker to the opening at the other end. This must bear a certain relationship to the "primary" resonance point of the speaker, which varies from about 45 cycles in the larger and better built speakers to around 120 cycles in the smaller sizes. Approximate lengths of the conduit for a few of the more popular speakers are as follows: Jensen A12pm, 3 feet 9 inches; A15pm, 4 feet 6 inches; HF-18, 7 feet; Cinaudagraph HY12-12, 5 feet 6 inches; HW13-13, 6 feet, 6 inches; SU18-12, 8 feet. These dimensions are approximate only, being based on theoretical considerations without any practical investigation of each case, but they can be considered accurate enough to serve as guides to the home constructor. The other design requirement of the labyrinth baffle is that the requirement of area of the conduit must be comparable in size to the area of the loudspeaker cone. For instance, an eight-inch cone has a plane area of about 50 square inches; the conduit should be of the order of 7" x 7", or 6" x 8". A baffle built according to such a design, and liberally fitted with the sound-absorbing material, makes a very satisfactory loudspeaker mounting.



Another loudspeaker mounting of very recent origin is quite different from the labyrinth, and its shape was unanticipated by the acoustic engineers, who discovered it almost by accident. It consists of a large hollow drum with a perfectly hemispherical back. The speaker is mounted in the exact center of the flat side, and the inside of the drum is very heavily damped with sound-absorbing material. The total effect of the assembly is very much that of a kettle drum supported on one edge. This arrangement is found to have a clean, boomless bass of good length.

Several models have been constructed with a face of four-foot diameter, which means, of course, a maximum depth of two feet. The length of the bass response is apparently improved with an increase in size, however. The impact of a drum-like object which was, say, six feet across the face and three feet deep, would certainly be unwelcome in the average living room, especially with the framework necessary to support it upright on one edge.

OVERTONES

■ It looks as though Stravinsky's recent appearances with the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York are to bear fruit, for rumor has it that he recorded with that orchestra *Sacre du Printemps* and *Petrushka* for Columbia... We are given to understand that Toscanini has approved a recording of the *Eroica Symphony* made with the NBC Symphony Orchestra... also that the Primrose String Quartet, which has been heard in concert and on the air this past year, has recorded for Victor the *Seven Last Words* of Haydn, Smetana's *String Quartet in E minor*, and the Schumann *Quintet in E flat* with Sanromá at the piano.

* * *

■ It is rumored that Edward Kilenyi has recorded the Schubert-Liszt *Wanderer Fantasy*; with what orchestra we were not able to ascertain... that Toscanini's recording of the Beethoven *Fourth Symphony*, made with the BBC Orchestra, will be issued shortly... that Vronsky and Babin have recorded Rachmaninoff's *Fantasy*, Milhaud's *Scaramouche*, Babin's transcription of the *Rosenkavalier Waltzes*, and the Busoni *Duo*.

The N. Y. Philharmonic String Quartet, composed of first desk men from the Philharmonic Orchestra, has recorded Tchaikovsky's *Quartet in D major, Op. 11* (the quartet

These unfortunate proportions would seem to forestall the general commercial development of this type of mounting.

The home constructor who is willing to clutter up his home in the interest of better reproduction, or just to satisfy his tinkering instinct, will find this idea very attractive. The difficulty will be in constructing a hemispherical shell for the back. A metal stamping of about three-foot diameter has been made by one of the larger loudspeaker manufacturers, and may become available to the experimenter. For straight home construction, a papier maché shell formed over a plaster hemisphere would appear to be the most practicable method. The drum mounting has not yet been thoroughly investigated, and if there are any further discoveries with regard to its idiosyncrasies or requirements, they will be reported in this department.

The writer will be very glad to receive inquiries or comments concerning these methods of mounting loudspeakers.

of the famous *Andante cantabile*) for Royale records; and Lamar Stringfield, the American composer, has recorded his *Moods of a Moonshiner* for Royale. The latter work is played by flute and string quartet.

EUROPEAN RECORD RELEASES

England

BACH: *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*; and SCARLATTI: *Sonata in G major, L. 387*; Myra Hess (piano). H.M.V. disc B9035.

BRAHMS: *Second Piano Concerto*; Bachaus and Saxon State Orch., dir. Boehm. H.M.V. DB3930/5.

BEETHOVEN: *Kreutzer Sonata*; Lili Kraus and Simon Goldberg. Parlophone discs R20478/81.

CHABRIER: *España Rhapsody*; Beecham and the London Phil. Orch. Col. disc LX880. LISZT: *Les Preludes*; Weingartner and Lond. Sym. Orch. Columbia LX877/8.

MOZART: *Sonata in C major, K. 545*; and *Allemande and Courante, K. 399*; Eileen Joyce. Parlophone E11442/3.

PERGOLESI: *Concertino in F minor*; and VIVALDI: *Largo from Concerto in F major*; Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca X148/9.

SCHUBERT: *Impromptu in A flat major, Op. 90, No. 5*; Eileen Joyce. Parloph. E11440.

SCHUBERT: *Wanderer Nachtlied*; and *Heidenröslein*; Edi Laider (baritone). H. M. V. X6361.

SCHUBERT: *Das Wandern*; and *Morgengruss*; Aksel Schiotz (tenor). H. M. V. X6312.

SCHUMANN: *Arabesque*, Op. 18; Louis Kentner. Columbia DB1903.

SIBELIUS: *Sea Journey*; PALMGREN: *Boat Ballad*; and *The Sky is Blue and White*; Hail, my Finland; Finlandia Male Voice Choir. Parlophone E11444.

SVENDSEN: *Romance for violin and orchestra*; Arlo Anderson and Copenhagen Phil. Orch. H.M.V. DB5232.

VIVALDI-KREISLER: *Concerto in C*; Jean Pougnet (violin) and Orch. Columbia discs DX963/4.

France

CACCINI: *Amaryllis*; and BACH: *Air de l'Oratorio de Noël*; Claire Chalandon (soprano). H.M.V. DB5098.

CHABRIER: *Scherzo Falsé*; and *Impromptu*; Robert Casadesus (piano). Col. LFX589.

CHOPIN: *Preludes*, Op. 28; Alfred Cortot (piano). H.M.V. DB2015/18.

DANDELOT: *Chansons de Bilitis*; Germaine Cernay (contralto). Columbia RFX 69.

FALLA: *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*; Lucette Descaves (piano) and Paris Conservatory Orch., dir. Eugene Bigot. H.M.V. DB5095/7.

GOLESTAN: *Le laoutar (Musique Roumaine)*; Lola Bobesca (violin) and Mme. Gimisty-Brissou (piano). H.M.V. disc K8422.

GOLESTAN: *Romanesca (Rapsodie)*; Bobesca and Gimisty-Brissou. H.M.V. L1079.

GRIEG: *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*; Beecham and London Phil. Orch. Columbia LFX587/8.

TOSTI: *Airil*; and *De Crescenzo: Notte d'amore*; Beniamino Gigli. H.M.V. DB3815.

VIVALDI: *Concerto for flute*, Op. 10, No. 3 (*Le Chardonneret*); and MOZART: *Andante for flute*, K. 315; Lucien Lavailotte (flute) and Paris Cons. Orch. Pathe PA1831/32.

Italy

BOITO: *Mefistofele—Dai campi*, and *Giunto sul passo*; Giovanni Malipiero (tenor). H. M. V. DA5382.

PERGOLESI: *Sei Sonate*; Corradina Mola (harpsichord). H.M.V. DA5373/75.

VERDI: *Traviata—E strano*, and *Follie! Follie!*; Lina Aimaro. H.M.V. DB5358.

VERDI: *Il Trovatore—Tacea la notte placida*; and PUCCINI: *Tosca—Vissi d'arte*; Maria Caniglia. H.M.V. DB5360.

EDITORIAL NOTES

■ In the past quarter of a century the position of Tschaiikowsky has altered in the musical world. Twenty-five years ago his symphonies were more popular than those of Brahms; today Brahms' works have taken precedence over those of the Russian. Formerly Tschaiikowsky was universally regarded as the most highly endowed of his countrymen; today his position as the foremost Russian composer is challenged by the growing appreciation of the genius of Moussorgsky. This does not necessarily mean that Tschaiikowsky is completely displaced in the affections of the music-loving public, but rather that a revaluation has taken place.

Like Paul Rosenfeld, who voices the viewpoint of "the minority," we as well as others have undoubtedly found our admiration for the Russian's music gradually wane, although like him we may have been captured by its seeming magic in the beginning. It is almost inevitable that the music lover who finds his appreciation of music broadening should come in time to value Tschaiikowsky less; but this does not mean that he will discard him altogether.

Tschaiikowsky was one of the world's greatest melodists; and the flow and grace of much of his melody were largely inspired by his love for Mozart and the Italian opera composers. The overwhelming ripeness of his emotions, their highly personal character, and the abundance of clichés, however, too often overbalanced the beauty of his melody. This was his chief weakness. As Constant Lambert has said: "Repetitions that are charming in Haydn become wearisome in Tschaiikowsky, but we should not jump at the conclusion that the cause lies in Tschaiikowsky's inferiority as a composer. The repetitions in Tschaiikowsky are wearisome because a definite emotional reaction is attached to the different themes as they occur, whereas in Haydn and Mozart our emotional reaction is derived from the movement as a whole." And further: "Tschaiikowsky's symphonies are wearing thin not so much because we are losing faith in his dramatic conception of Fate, as because he himself destroys his faith by bringing in Fate at such fixed and mechanical intervals."

It has become the custom to disparage

Tschaikowsky the pessimist and forget Tschai-kowsky the artist. If one examines the music of his contemporaries as well as his own, one quickly finds that he was an abler craftsman than most of them. That he was intellectually gifted is undeniable, but one is perforce made to realize that his intellect was not sufficiently strong to control his emotional turbulence.

We have said elsewhere that Tschai-kowsky was everyman's musician; and that the urge that drives people to him is perhaps emotional. He has been rightfully called the supreme interpreter in music of elemental and emotional thought. As we pointed out once before, he knew the ecstatic horror that Dostoevsky knew and felt; it was not only a lack of vitality that prevented him expressing it as saliently or as deeply as the writer, but an inability to rationalize about these things, to accept them unequivocally without complaint. The late H. T. Parker once summed him up in a few words: "The heart of Tschai-kowsky was that of a little child; the brain was that of a man weary of the world and all its vanities . . . The emptiness of life obsessed him [in this he radically differs from Dostoevsky], and in the expression of his thought he is again the man of his period. When faith returns again to the world, his music may be studied with interest and curiosity as an important document in sociology. But in the present we are under his mighty spell." Yes, even though we may tire of his music and often feel surfeited by its highly individualized emotional content, it is impossible entirely to refute his spell. And though we may find that we do not return often to his music, most of us will agree that when we do encounter a well played performance of his best works we are for the moment "under his mighty spell."

* * *

The many readers who have written to us in the past year protesting that far too many records are issued each month have shown an appreciation of the reviewers' problems. There is so much to recommend that is worthwhile, and yet, as one writer has said, to attempt to listen to all that comes out in one month is hardly possible for anybody who has to earn a living. However, since it is important to know about all the truly worthwhile recordings, the staff of this magazine is endeavoring to call attention to their existence each month. If upon occasion we seem to pass lightly or casually over what may seem to the reader a recording of more importance than we attach to it, our action is not intended as

a slight but often is governed by the fact that there are so many other more important items. Too, if we fail to review some recordings which the reader feels deserve reviewing, this may be occasioned by the fact that we did not have access to them.

It might be well to reiterate here for the benefit of our many new readers that we are glad to tell a reader about any special recording in which he may be interested, or, further, if he has not time or opportunity to hear all recordings, which of those in existence we consider the best of a given work, and why we regard it as such. If we do not answer letters quickly, please remember that our correspondence is extremely heavy. Musical and technical advice is freely given and from the many letters received in reply we have every reason to believe that we have helped a great many readers. If a writer wishes a reply may we suggest that a stamped and a self-addressed envelope be included with his letter?

* * *

The emergence from England at this time of the Sibelius Society Album No. 6 seems to us a lasting tribute to the British spirit to "carry on" in spite of adversities. True, much of the recording was planned and possibly executed prior to the outbreak of the war; however, it might very well have been shelved and held over until after the war. Instead, it was issued at a time when heavy financial burdens were being placed upon the people, and from all reports we have had it has been enthusiastically received. What sacrifices music lovers may make to acquire this set, we can only guess; however, the rewards, we believe, will fully compensate. For the music is of unusual interest.

Despite conditions in England there is an even greater interest in recorded music there now than prior to the war. "The music lover feels more today the necessity of a spiritual tonic," writes one prominent member of the record trade. "I should say that good music has been a very great comfort, and indeed an inspiration, during the Black-Outs which are, as you can well imagine, a most distressing necessity." Another writer in the trade states that perhaps even a war is not without compensations, for despite the fact that it has depleted the record lists it has not spoiled the record business, but given the music lover instead an incentive to make a resumé of the many fine recordings already existent in the catalogues.

* * *

Readers interested in the new Elena Gerhardt album of songs, which we announced

in Overtones last month, will be glad to know that the set can be procured for considerably less than \$50.00, the price quoted us by Mme Gerhardt herself. Apparently the original intention was to issue this album with each record signed by the singer in a special edition and the charge in this case was to be \$50.00. However, the album is available through importers with an autograph of the singer in the cover only at \$15.00. We are given to understand by those who have heard the set that it is among the best things that the singer has done for the phonograph.

PRIZE WINNING LISTS

■ The usefulness of our previous prize lists of Lieder and Chamber Music prompted us to offer prizes for two lists of fifteen single-disc orchestral recordings. We hope that the winning lists will serve readers as advantageously as the previous ones.

Mr. William Heath, of Carmel, New York, the winner of the first prize, has so clearly expressed our purposes in running the contest that we can do no more than to elaborate on his introductory comments. He truly states that in the body of the symphonic repertoire there are many neglected works that are often passed by. Thus it was not his purpose (nor was it ours) to recommend great, but over-familiar masterpieces. Every record collector is perfectly aware of works like the *Meistersinger* prelude or the *Polka and Fugue* from *Schwanda*, but fewer are acquainted with Turina's *Rapsodie Sinfonia*.

It remains to state how we selected the winners from the many applicants. Several matters were considered of primary importance: the quality of the music, the quality of the recording, the notes accompanying the selections, and the variety of the list. All other things being equal, it was considered of more importance to recommend a rarely-heard piece of good music than a frequently-played piece of good music.

Much difficulty was encountered in determining the winners. The lists submitted by David Hall (N. Y. City), Stanley Metalitz (Washington, D. C.) and Brinley Reese (Nashville, Tenn.) were splendid, and were weakened only by the inclusion of transcriptions or too obvious choices. We feel that they should be congratulated for their good taste, and we are sending each of them a record as a consolation award. Leo Zeveloff of Brooklyn, N. Y. was the second prize winner.

FIRST PRIZE LIST

With Comments by W. Heath, Carmel, N. Y.

The following list has not been devised with the idea of recommending the obvious "greats" in music. It is logical to believe that a music lover interested in single-disc orchestral recordings will not need to have standard works by the most famous composers recommended. For instance, records of overtures by Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, or Wagner are "naturals" that are a part of Everyman's collection. But in the *corpus* of the symphonic repertoire there are many equally deserving, but neglected, works that usually are passed over. The following list is an attempt to call some of them to the attention of the readers of *The American Music Lover*. Perhaps the intrinsic merit of some of the music may not be that of a Mozart or Beethoven work, but I sincerely believe that it is a list from which a listener can derive considerable pleasure and satisfaction.

1. BACH: *Ricercare* from *The Musical Offering*; Edwin Fischer and his String Orch. Victor disc 8660.

A great work and a great recording; it is a necessity for any Bach collection.

2. ROSENUELLER: *Sonata in E minor*; played by "Ars Rediviva" Group. Victor disc 12489.

There is somber beauty to this orchestral work written by a forerunner of Bach, who in his day was highly regarded for his originality. Another recording gem!

3. BACH, Wilhelm Friedeman: *Symphony in D minor*; Phil. Chamber Orch., Hamburg, directed by Dr. Schmidt-Isserstedt. Telefunken disc E2599.

A fine example of the music of Bach's eldest son, who, like his father was a distinguished organist.

4. COUPERIN: *Second Concert Royale* (1714-1715); Ensemble of Viols and Harpsichord conducted by Curt Sachs. Anthologie Sonore disc 13.

The Concerts Royaux were the last homage paid by Couperin to his King, Louis IV, who died in 1715. This is a pleasing example of early 18th-century orchestral music authentically played by viols and harpsichord.

5. STAMITZ: *Quartet for Orchestra in F major*; Goberman and the N. Y. Sinfonietta. Timely disc 1803.

This spontaneous and infectious work was written by one of a famous family who are accredited with having influenced the development of the symphony during the 18th-century.

6. MOZART: *Adagio and Fugue*, K. 546; Busch Chamber Players, Victor disc 12324.

An impressive and independent orchestral work of Mozart that should be widely known.

7. GLUCK: *Alceste—Overture*; Mengelberg and Concertgebouw Orch., Decca 25571. (Also by Boult and B. B. C. Orch., Victor disc 12041).

Not as great an overture as the one to *Iphigenie en Aulide*, but still a fine example of Gluck's inspired dramatic writing.

8. BERLIOZ: *Funeral March for the Last scene of Hamlet*; Harty and London Phil. Orch., Columbia disc 68429.

This is one of the best of the short works of Berlioz. It is not only imaginative, but has nobility and depth of feeling.

9. MAHLER: *Adagietto from 5th Symphony*; Walter and Vienna Philharmonic Orch., Victor disc 12319.

This lovely music for strings and harps owns a nostalgic sweetness; it is Mahler the Romantic in a mood of poetic sentiment.

10. LIADOW: *The Enchanted Lake*; Koussevitzky and Boston Sym. Orch., Victor disc 14078.

11. MOUSSORGSKY: *Khozantchina — Prelude*; Koussevitzky and Boston Sym. Orch., Victor disc 14415.

These Russian works are heard far less frequently than they deserve. The Liadow is quiet and dreamy impressionistic music, and the Moussorgsky picture of dawn rising over the Kremlin is one of the most beautiful things to come from his pen.

12. TURINA: *Rapsodie Sinfonia* for piano and orchestra; played by Eileen Joyce and Sym. Orch., directed by Clarence Raybould, Decca disc 25452.

Turina's authentic Spanish tonal coloring and facile melodies make this a delightful work. Although it features the piano it is not necessarily a work outside the orchestral category.

13. DELIUS: *Summer Night on the River*;

Beecham and London Phil. Orch., Columbia disc 17087-D.

The moods of spring and summer are beautifully set forth in miniature tone poems by Delius in his *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* (a modern recording of which is badly needed) and in this work. This is a recent recording and a fine example of Delius' orchestral purity of style.

14. SIBELIUS: *The Swan of Tuonela*; Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Victor disc 7380.

The strange and moving beauty of the swan's song remains one of Sibelius' most commanding scores.

15. HARRIS: *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*; Ormandy and Minneapolis Sym. Orch., Victor disc 8629.

A modern American work based on a Civil War song which reflects the spirit of the people. (There is one other American work that I would like to have recommended here, and since it may appeal to some more than the above work, it may be cited. It is Kurt Kennan's *Night Soliloquy* for flute and orchestra, played by the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra, conducted by Howard Hanson on Victor disc 15659. It is coupled with Griffes' *The White Peacock*.)

SECOND PRIZE LIST

With Comments by Leo Zetveloff, B'klyn, N. Y.

1. PURCELL: *Three Dances from The Fairy Queen*; Jacques String Orchestra, dir. Reginald Jacques, Col. disc 69407-D.

This splendidly played disc is a tuneful remembrance of the music of England's greatest composer. The reverse contains a little gem by Handel—the minuet from *Berenice*.

2. WAGNER: *Prelude to Die Meistersinger*; London Phil. Orch., dir. Beecham, Columbia 68854-D.

There must be at least one Wagner on any list of orchestral composers, and the present work is with good reason acclaimed as one of his supreme masterpieces.

3. BACH: *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*; Busch Chamber Players, Col. disc 68439-D.

Perhaps the best of the *Brandenburg Concerti*; undoubtedly one of the best introductions to the orchestral music of Bach.

4. MOZART: *Adagio and Fugue in C minor*; Busch Chamber Players, Victor disc 12324.

A moving work that is one of the most beautiful creations of Mozart. The fugue has a structure that Bach himself might have been proud of.

5. BERLIOZ: *Overture to Beatrice and Benedict*; London Phil. Orch., dir. Harty. Col. disc 68342-D.

Berlioz and Shakespeare in this music are an irresistible combination. The vigor and color of the music make the work one of the most spontaneous of the composer's outbursts.

6. VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS: *Greensleeves Fantasia*; Jacques Orchestra, dir. Reginald Jacques. Col. disc 69735-D.

Although based on an English folk song, the treatment is so free as to result in almost an original composition. It is one of the most poetic and beautiful pieces of music on records, and should be in every library.

7. GLINKA: *Kamarinskaya*; London Symphony, dir. Coates. Victor 11482.

Less known than the *Ruslan and Ludmilla Overture*, but more rewarding musically. A splendid, Slavic performance by Coates.

8. DEBUSSY: *The Afternoon of a Faun*; London Phil. Orch., dir. Beecham. Columbia 69600-D.

Although the most famous of the composer's orchestral works, one derives new satisfaction from each new hearing. It is an ear'y work, but he never surpassed it in color or atmospheric suggestion.

9. DELIUS: *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*; London Phil. Orch., dir. Beecham. Col. 67474-D.

An introspective and imaginative performance of one of the finest examples of post-Debussy impressionism. It is also a good introduction to the music of Delius.

10. DEFALLA: *La Vida Breve, Dances 1 and 2*; Orch. of Théâtre Royal, dir. Bustin. Columbia 67818-D.

The very essence of Spanish music: pulsating rhythms and gorgeous coloring. Performance is adequate; the music almost conducts itself.

11. STRAUSS: *Overture to Die Fledermaus*; Minneapolis Sym., dir. Ormandy. Victor 8651.

No comment is necessary here; the overture is the summit of light opera, and is the composer's masterpiece.

12. BEETHOVEN: *Egmont Overture*; Vienna Phil. Orch., dir. Weingartner. Col. 69196-D.

Perhaps the finest of the *Overtures*, not excluding the *Leonore No 3*; certainly the most compact. This electric music is given an equally electric performance by Weingartner.

13. STRAUSS: *Rosenkavalier — Waltzes*; Berlin Phil. Orch., dir. Walter. Col. 67892.

These are among the most ingratiating waltzes in the repertoire; Strauss out-Strausses his namesake, and gives us the apotheosis of the Viennese tradition.

14. RAVEL: *Alborado del Gracioso*; Minneapolis Orch., dir. Ormandy. Victor 8552.

A glowing, scintillating score by an outstanding master of French music. This is the best recording, although some may prefer Straram's interpretation (Col. 68977).

15. WARLOCK: *Capriol Suite*; London Chamber Orch., dir. Bernard. HMV D-K576.

This little known selection comprises settings of six tunes from Arbot's treatise on dancing (1588). There is an archaic flavor; Warlock has preserved the original idiom, but at the same time has created original and lovely music. This disc should be released in this country.

SWING MUSIC NOTES

ENZO ARCHETTI

■ There are several programs on the air well worth the jazz lover's attention. On Sunday afternoon, at 4:30, on Station WJZ there is one that goes by the portentous title of *The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street*. It is jazz pure and simple presented in a tongue-in-the-cheek manner. The program opens like a symphony broadcast, with much tuning up by the orchestra and an announcement in solemn, important words in the manner of the announcer who introduces the Toscanini concerts. The titles are pronounced importantly, with verbose explanations, and then the orchestra will probably break out with the *Twelfth Street Rag*. Every musician introduced is "Maestro" and every

guest speaker is "Professor." All good fun and good jazz.

On Wednesdays, at 8:00 P. M. on WOR, there is a program called the *Sheep and Goats Club*. This is a decidedly unique affair. First of all, it is entirely Negro. The Sheep are the spiritual and hymn-loving members of the congregation. The Goats are the jazz loving element. Between the two is the Moderator who has to see that each faction is equally represented musically. The result is a well balanced program, presented in an interesting way. Some of the guest artists who have contributed so far are Meade Lux Lewis, Mary Lou Williams, and Leadbelly.

On Monday nights, over WNEW, at 10:00 P. M. there is a jazz program of the *Information Please* kind. Milt Gabler and Leonard Feather are the "experts" and their job is to identify certain classic jazz records played to them anonymously. The records are suggested by the audience.

Roy Eldridge and his orchestra, with Billie Holiday, will probably follow Frankie Newton at Kelly's Stables shortly.

At Nick's, in the Village, Sidney Bechet and Zutie Singleton are holding forth. Sidney Bechet has his trio, including himself playing both clarinet and soprano sax, Jimmy Mac Lin playing guitar, and Wilson Meyers on bass. Zutie has a six-piece outfit consisting of Sidney de Paris on trumpet; Albert Nichols, clarinet; Ferdinand Arbello, trombone; Gene Anderson, piano; Dick Fullbright, bass; and Zutie holding down the battery.

The race lists of the various companies are always worth watching. Often they contain much better material than is usually found in the too commercial regular lists. For instance: Decca has just imported into New York three blues singers whose names are familiar enough to jazz connoisseurs but not too well known to jazz lovers in general. Roosevelt Sykes, the "Honey Dripper" (with Jonah Jones, trumpet; Sidney Catlett, drums; and Sykes himself on piano and doing the vocals) recorded ten sides. Johnny Temple, labeled as the "Blues Singer," also recorded ten sides assisted by Buster Bailey, clarinet; Herbert Cowens, drums; Albert Casey, guitar; and Sam B. Price, piano. Incidentally, Price plays Pine Top's original Boogie Woogie as accompaniment on one of these discs. Third is Petie Wheatstraw, who is known by the colorful title of the "Devil's Son-in-Law." He recorded eight sides with Lil Armstrong on piano, Sidney Catlett on drums, and Jones on trumpet supporting. From down New Orleans

way they got George Guesnon to do some of his best with Charles Wingy Carpenter (trumpet), Jimmy Shirley (electric guitar), Bob Martin (drums), Edward J. Allen (piano) and an unnamed bass player.

Sam B. Price's Band on Decca is a new name to conjure with. The line-up is: Don Stovall, alto sax; Ray Hill, tenor sax; Joe Brown, trumpet; Mullins, second trumpet; and Sam himself, on piano. They recorded four sides for Decca, including a very fine version of the *Cow Cow Blues*.

It is said that Decca is planning a special date for New Orleans music to be made by musicians especially imported from there: Stephen Smith, of the Hot Record Society, is responsible for the session and the artists.

Earl Hines' new piano records for Bluebird—*Body and Soul* and *Child of a Disordered Brain*—were made with a Storytone electric piano.

On the West coast, Columbia recorded some discs privately for Bill Richards. They turned out so well that Columbia plans to release them generally. The recording artists were Art Tatum, John Kirby, Bobby Hackett, and Stuff Smith.

The solo-Art record of Jimmy Yancey, reviewed in this column last month, was the first record ever made by Yancey, one of the earliest of boogie woogie players. The record was such a success that he was immediately signed up to record for Vocalion and his first disc under that label has appeared featuring him as accompanist for the blues singer Charles Segar. The titles are *Key to the Highway* and *Stop and Fix It Mama*.

Supplementing the information published last month concerning the changes in Tommy Dorsey's orchestra, the latest news is the addition of Joe Bushkin on piano. Joe had been with Bunny Berigan originally, and on and off with other bands, but he was always rather devoted to Bunny. Actually, he was probably the only musician in Bunny's original band who approached Bunny's standard as a musician. Berigan's recent switch-over to Tommy Dorsey no doubt had much to do with Joe Bushkin's decision to join also.

Lazy River (Arodin-Carmichael); and *Sweet Lorraine* (Burwell-Parish). H.R.S. Original, 12-inch disc 1000, price \$1.50. *China Boy* (Winfree-Boutelje); and *Four or Five Times* (Gay-Hellman). H.R.S. Original, disc 2001, price \$1.50.

Both played by the Bechet-Spanier Big Four (Sidney Bechet, clarinet and soprano

sax; Mugsy Spanier, trumpet; Carmen Mastren, guitar; Wellman Braud, bass).

On March 28th, the Hot Record Society resumed its recording activities after a lay-off of several years during which time it had concentrated on re-issuing cut-outs. Stephen Smith was responsible for the session which produced the above four sides. To him I take off my hat and bow low in sincere thanks: such splendid jazz so seldom comes my way of late.

I think I have often indicated in this column my sincere admiration for the art of Sidney Bechet. My admiration rises several more pegs after hearing these discs.

Bechet dominates all four sides but not because he hogs the show. He shines above all the others through sheer artistry. Such tone, such phrasing, such subtlety! Listen to that first chorus on clarinet in *Lazy River*. Only Bechet could do it that way. And the soprano sax chorus near the end of that side!

Lazy River begins with a bass and guitar introduction which leads to a nicely relaxed duet for trumpet and clarinet. Then comes that marvelous aforementioned clarinet solo. The trumpet chorus following is a bit of a let down but Bechet's beautiful low register notes backing it are a marvel to hear. Braud has a bass chorus all to himself, punctuated by quiet exclamations on clarinet and trumpet. Then Bechet resumes on soprano sax. The ending is not too well coordinated. Mugsy's tone does not seem to blend well with Bechet's.

Sweet Lorraine is in the same slow tempo which gives all three artists time to relax and give out. The unusual introduction is a marvel of timing and control. A chorus à duo, nicely relaxed, and then alternating choruses on trumpet and soprano sax. Bechet shines again because of the mellowness of his tone. On this side, the blend of trumpet and sax is perfect though Mugsy's tone is curiously monotonous compared to Bechet's well varied playing. The guitar deserves special mention for its modest but effective support. It gets a chorus to itself backed by low tones on the other instruments. The coda is most unusual.

China Boy starts right off in a swell fast tempo with all four men together bouncing along with marvelous swing. There are several beautifully phrased choruses in succession by Bechet, neatly backed by some swell rhythm. The trumpet takes off from Bechet's last note in much the same vein but, by comparison, the phrasing sounds labored. Then Wellman Braud shows his mettle in a good bouncing chorus. He hasn't forgotten his days

under Ellington. Most of the rest of the record is sax and trumpet counterpoint at a breathless pace.

Four or Five Times slows down to a medium tempo. All four play an introduction leading to a fine Bechet clarinet chorus, soft and smooth as velvet. Mugsy's muted trumpet playing is much more interesting than his open bell work. Then echo choruses for trumpet and clarinet and a guitar interlude with a chordal background. The all-in shows beautiful cooperation and the coda is a marvel of timing.

By all this you will gather that I am most enthusiastic about the two records. If the Hot Record Society never issues anything else its existence will still be well justified by these discs.

Blue Note has also made some new recordings with Sidney Bechet. The Sidney Bechet Blue Note Quartet, heard on previous releases, plays *Lonesome Blues* and *Dear Old Southland* on No. 502. Simultaneously, Teddy Bunn's first solo records were issued: *King Porter Stomp* and *Bachelor Blues* (No. 503) and *Guitar in High* and *Blues without Words* (No. 504). All of these records will be commented upon as soon as they are received.

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The ever growing audience for the music of Sibelius will delight in the selections now available in these splendid recordings. In Memoriam, The Bard and Valse Triste have a peculiarly touching significance in the light of Finland's recent tragedy. En Saga, Incidental Music for The Tempest, and the Pelléas and Méisande Suite round out this particularly attractive collection—played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Album M-658 (*AM-658 and *DM-658), 14 sides, \$10.50.

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Mozart's Concerto No. 14, in E Flat Major (K. 449) is delightfully played by Rudolf Serkin, whose stature as a pianist of extraordinary gifts grows from performance to performance. With the Adolf Busch Chamber Players, under the direction of Adolf Busch, this charming concerto receives a sparkling and vigorous interpretation. Album M-657 (*AM-657 and *DM-657), 6 sides, \$6.50.

Rubinstein Records Chopin's Mazurkas, Volume II

Eagerly awaited, this selection will win enthusiastic praise. Album M-656, 10 sides, \$10.00.

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Der Schwanendreher, by Hindemith and Weinberger's Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree have wit, gaiety and tunefulness in common. The first is played by the composer (viola) with Arthur Fiedler's Sinfonietta. — Album M-659

(*AM-659 and *DM659), 6 sides, \$6.50. The London Philharmonic Orchestra is heard in the Weinberger work. Album M-654, 4 sides, \$3.50.

This Month in the Connoisseur's Corner

Sextet in A Major (Dvorak) played by the Budapest String Quartet, will delight the most exacting lovers of chamber music. Album M-661 (*AM-661 and *DM-661) 8 sides, \$8.00 . . . A notable excerpt from Daphne by Richard Strauss—never before available on Victor Records—with Margarete Teschemacher (Soprano) and Torsten Ralf (Tenor) and The Saxon State Orchestra, conducted by Karl Böhm. Album M-660, 4 sides, \$4.50.

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Two lovely, old Italian songs by Tito Schipa... Richard Viñes in fascinating piano works... Alexander Kipnis in favorite Russian songs by Gretchaninoff and Malashkin—also a song by Stravinsky, never before recorded... Toscanini and B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, playing a magnificent version of Beethoven's Leonore Overture—No. 1, in C. Major... Two songs by Lawrence Tibbett... valuable selections from American music, played by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, with Howard Hanson conducting . . . Also, distinguished performances by Mischa Elman, Richard Crooks, Marcel Grandjany, Charles Courboin and others. Be sure to check the complete list at your RCA Victor Music Merchants.

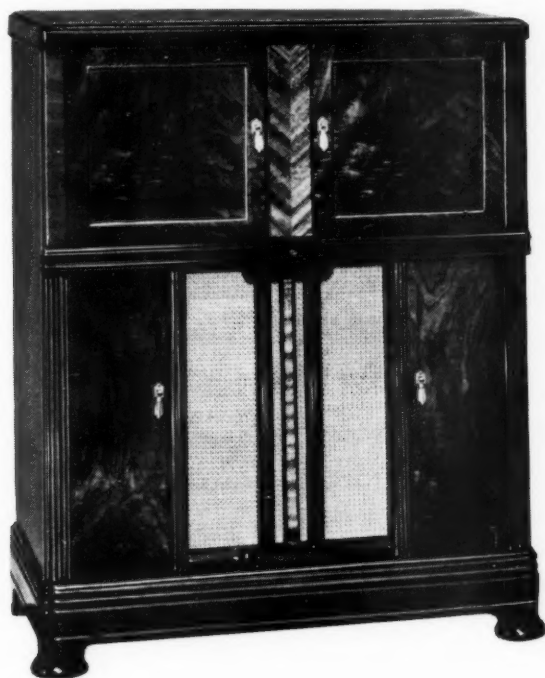
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RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Leonore Overture No. 1 in C major, Op. 138*; played by the B. B. C. Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor disc 15945, price \$2.00.

■ I must confess Toscanini's recordings made with the B. B. C. Orchestra have given me much greater pleasure than those he has made with the NBC Symphony. There are in the former more roundness of tone, a greater warmth of feeling and an ingratiating resonance lacking in the latter. One cannot but rejoice that the Italian maestro chose to play this infrequently heard *Leonore* overture, since its inherent greatness has been somewhat unjustly overshadowed by the more architectural grandeur of the *Leonore No. 3*.

This overture represents a sort of middle stage in Beethoven's efforts to find a satisfactory overture to his one and only opera, which was first produced under the title of *Leonore*. At the premiere of the opera the overture now known as *Leonore No. 2* was played. A year later it was given with the overture known as *Leonore No. 3*. The excessive length of both these overtures (the latter has come to be justly regarded as a symphonic poem) so overshadowed the music of the first act of the opera that Beethoven decided to write still another *Leonore* overture, hence the present work. It is much more in an operatic style than its predecessors, but it has never been used in the operatic production, for Beethoven greatly revised his opera some years later, renaming it *Fidelio* and writing for it yet another overture which we know now under the latter title.

It will not be necessary to recommend this work to the Toscanini fans, but to those who are not attracted to a recording by the magic of a name only, it might be well to say, do not miss this disc. If it had been available last month, it would doubtless have been in one of our prize-winning lists of single orchestral discs.

—P. H. R.

HANDEL: *Ballet Suite from Alcina*; played by the Paris Conservatory Orchestra, direction Felix Weingartner. Columbia set X-164, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Mengelberg recorded a suite from Handel's ballet-opera in 1929, which was among the most popular of the Handel recordings of its day. Weingartner plays more of the ballet music than Mengelberg did, but omits the overture. The first disc here (69857-D) is given up to the so-called *Dream Music* from Act 2 and the second (69858) to the *Entrance Music* to Act 3 and other ballet pieces throughout the score—Gavotte, Sarabande, Gavotte, Menuet, Alla Breve, Tamburino.

The character of the *Dream Music* is suggested by the titles, which some authorities claim Handel did not attach to the music. They are *Entrances of the Agreeable Dreams—of the Menacing Dreams—of the Agreeable Frightened Dreams*, and *Combat of Dreams, Sad and Agreeable*.

Handel is said to have been inspired in the writing of this music by the fact that the dancers were being led by a then-celebrated ballerina, Mme. Sallé. The music is indeed in his most graciously melodic style. The present arrangement for modern orchestra would seem to have been the work of George Gohler. It omits the harpsichord. Weingartner shows an admirable regard and sympathy for the music—its poetic passages are set forth with expressive sensibility. The recording has been estimably accomplished.

The notes with the set, like others of recent months, set forth some inaccurate statements. Thus the assertion that Handel was not a successful opera composer is not true. Handel did not write oratorios because he was more successful in that field, but because the Bishop of London would not let him produce opera during the Lenten season. Many of his so-called oratorios, according to Handel authorities, are in reality operas, which because of various circumstances were produced without benefit of scenery, costumes, and stage action.

—P. H. R.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 7 (No. 9) in C Major*; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction Frederick Stock. Columbia set M-403, eleven sides, price \$11.00.

■ When Bruno Walter's performance with the London Symphony was issued last November I wrote that at last we had a reading that did outstanding justice to the drama and

poetry of this work. Now we have another version of the symphony, in which Stock, in his own way, has done equally well by it. Elsewhere I have pointed out that no music can be necessarily confined to any one man's feeling for it. It is possible to enjoy the Walter performance of this work upon occasion, and again to enjoy the Stock performance, and, as one listens and the music grows under the guidance of the man of the moment, to forget any other interpretation.

There are those who believe that it is the critic's duty to recommend one set above another to his reader. This is not always fair to the reader, because although the approach of one conductor to the music may please one man it may not necessarily please another. Then too there is the matter of recording, which in some cases may be far pleasanter to the ears of one listener than to another. A discerning critic should endeavor to present as well as he can both sides of a case. Let us take an example: both Walter and Weingartner have given us recent recordings of Brahms' *First Symphony*, and by and large critics have shown a wide preference for the Weingartner set. The contention has been made that Walter sentimentalizes the music too much. Be that as it may, Walter shows a deep affection for this music, as indeed he does for almost all of the great symphonic works, and he obtains a songfulness in it that differentiates his reading from the broader and more dignified rendition of Weingartner. There are bound to be those who will prefer Walter's liberal sentiment to Weingartner's imposing asceticism, and *vice versa*.

I have said that the romantic in Walter undoubtedly finds happy solace in Schubert's *C major Symphony*; one does not feel, however, that this is true of Stock. Stock's reading is broader in conception, more forthright; he does not linger over melodies the way Walter does. Particularly is this noticeable in Stock's pacing of the opening of the first movement and in the andante; he plays them at a quicker tempo, and in the case of the andante especially it is to the advantage of the music. There is a fine feeling for good phrasing and a considerate attention to dynamics in Stock's performance. The forthrightness and expansiveness of his reading appeal to me greatly.

The recording of this work is in many ways more impelling than that of the Walter set. The strength of its dynamics are greater—the fortes, for example, are fuller and more resonant. On the other hand, the pianissimos are not as clear, and there is a diffusion of tone. There also is a lack of uniformity in

the woodwind and brass reproduction at times, particularly in the first movement. (The Chicago Orchestra does not seem to have the fine oboe and horn players that the London Orchestra has.) The acoustics of the hall in which the orchestra plays unquestionably have much to do with this lack of uniformity; there is a distinct reverberation that must present problems in recording both in loud and soft passages. It is not likely that owners of the Walter set will wish to displace it, and the more advantageous price of the latter will undoubtedly be an attraction to prospective buyers. However, we suggest that those interested in the work hear both sets before making a decision.

Some readers have written in asking us if Schubert's *Symphony No. 9* is his *Symphony No. 7*. This work is known under both numbers. Actually it was the ninth in chronological order, and became known as the seventh because Schubert's real seventh, in E major, written in 1821, was lost. The present work dates from 1828, six months before its composer's death.

—P. H. R.

* * *

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 1 in B flat major, Op. 38*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set M-655, four discs, \$8.00.

■ It was in December, 1930, that the only other existent recording of Schumann's *First* was issued. Schumann's orchestral works have never been regarded as successful on the phonograph, and only his *Second* and *Fourth Symphonies* have achieved more than one recording. Despite all the criticism of Schumann as a poor orchestrator, of the clumsy scoring with its frequent thickness of texture which submerges detail, there is much to admire in his symphonies. Certainly the *First* emerges from this recording in the vital and clean-cut performance of Koussevitzky as a wholly engaging and exhilarating experience. It has been said that the best of Schumann "is an expression of states and conditions of soul," and that the hearer of his music "must in turn be imaginative and a dreamer." There is no program to this work, but it was intended by its composer to express the emotions of spring. In a letter to Spohr he said he completed the work towards the end of the winter of 1841 "in the vernal passion which influences men until they are very old, an emotion that surprises them again every year." The very buoyancy and élan of the first movement suggest spring. Its short introduction, in which horns and trumpets are prominently

featured, was intended to be an evocation from heaven of the vital force of the vernal season. And the finale is filled with the spirit of gaiety and youthful freshness.

Schumann was newly married when he wrote his *First Symphony*, and joyously happy. His great happiness and love found direct inspiration for this work in a poem on spring by Boettger. The entire composition was sketched in four days — days in which Clara complained her Robert was cold toward her, “yet the reason is a delightful one.” Both Schumann and his wife were greatly excited with the completion of the sketches, and her exuberant references to it in her diary reveal her pleasure and enthusiasm. Remembering the Schumanns and their happiness as one listens to this music, one can sense their youthful admirations and dreams. The music is full of optimism and assurance, and yet it is not spectacular or entirely objective. For even in his most volatile and vigorous movements, Schumann is still the German romantic who speaks ardently and intimately from the heart.

The lyric larghetto owns none of the mournful characteristics of Schumann's later slow movements. It opens with a song for the violins, which gives way to a theme of agitated character. The music grows more elaborate in the recapitulation (opening side five), and then subsides in a solemn, short coda. The scherzo is linked directly to the larghetto, and is fortunately arranged in the recording to begin in the middle of side five. The vigor of the scherzo proper is immediately attractive. There are two trios, the first of which is ingenious and attractive, but the second is less so, being rather suggestive of an awkward minuet. The finale recalls Haydn with its tripping, dance-like melody.

I must say I thoroughly enjoyed the performance of this work. Koussevitzky has given it an invigorating and broadly expansive reading, and also preserved an admirable clarity of line—which is, of course, highly desirable in a Schumann symphony. The recording is brilliantly realized, so much so that some listeners may find a non-metallic needle preferable to steel. But much of the hard brightness of tone can be modified with a judicious manipulation of tone controls, particularly of the bass.

—P. H. R.

* * *

SOWERBY: *Comes Autumn Time* (A program overture). Victor 10-inch disc 2058, \$1.50.

VARDELL: *Joc Clark Steps Out* (Carolina Mountain Folk Tune); and STILL: *Scherzo* from *Afro-American Symphony*. Victor 10-inch disc 2059, price \$1.50. Played by

the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, direction Howard Hanson.

■ It is appropriate that Dr. Hanson, who has pioneered so much American orchestral music, should play these pieces. All three are engaging compositions and are here given vital and expressive performances.

Leo Sowerby is a gifted composer who deserves to have been represented before this on records. Born in 1895, he served as a bandmaster in the World War and later (1921) received an award of a scholarship in the American Academy at Rome. His overture, *Comes Autumn Time*, is a youthful work, written in his twenty-first year, and first performed by the Chicago Symphony. It is based upon Bliss Carman's lines:

“Now, when the time of fruit and grain
is come

A scent of wild grapes fills the racy air,
Comes autumn time with her sunburnt caravan. . . .”

The music opens in a festival spirit with clashing cymbals and trumpets and an upward surging theme. This gives way to a mood of contemplation, and the work ends with a return to the festivity of the opening. The little overture is well made, and is full of youthful enthusiasm.

Charles G. Vardell, Jr., who wrote *Joc Clark Steps Out*, is the son of a noted North Carolina music teacher. There is a braggadocio character to the present composition, based on a mountain tune upon which we were unable to get any information, but which suggests, curiously enough, an English folk origin. It is brilliantly and effectively scored.

The Negro composer, William Grant Still, was born in Mississippi in 1895. He was a student of Chadwick at the New England Conservatory and of Edgar Varèse in New York. Stokowski has introduced several of his orchestral works with the Philadelphia Orchestra, including this one. The treatment of the material here recalls Harl McDonald's *Rhumba* movement from the symphony of that name. It reflects the spirit of the modern dance and certainly the energized manner in which the Negro dancer goes at it. Of the three pieces it is of least consequence. The recording of all three works has been competently contrived.

—P. G.

* * *

STRAVINSKY: *Baiser de la Fée—Pas de deux*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, dir. Antal Dorati. Columbia disc 69840, price \$1.50.



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■ In his autobiography, Stravinsky devotes several pages to his *Baiser de la Fée* (*Kiss of the Fairy*). Towards the end of 1927 he was commissioned by Ida Rubinstein to compose a ballet for her repertory. Her painter, Alexandre Benois, suggested to the composer that music by Tchaikowsky be the basis, and Stravinsky fell in with the idea, since it gave him an opportunity of "paying heartfelt homage to Tchaikowsky's wonderful talent." For the subject of the ballet, he chose one of Andersen's fairy tales, *The Ice Maiden*, which seemed to him not only a beautiful story in itself, but appropriate as an allegory. Later Stravinsky made an orchestral suite of the music, and the present recording is the *pas de deux* from that suite.

The music here is a long, long way from *Le Sacre* or even *The Firebird*. The score is dedicated "to the muse of Tchaikowsky" and is written in a style that approximates very closely the ballet music of the melancholy Russian. One looks in vain for dissonance or the diabolical touches of the young Stravinsky. Agreeable and often charming melodies and a quiet simplicity characterize this effusion of sweetness and light. As stated above, it is based on themes by Tchaikowsky, although I cannot identify any on this disc. At any rate I enjoyed it, and I believe that the majority of music lovers will also. It is well conducted by Dorati, and the recording is good.

* * *

WEINBERGER: *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Constant Lambert. Victor set M-654, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra gave us a recording of this work recently (see March issue for review). Curiously, the present set was issued in England a month earlier. The work is one of the novelties of the season; it was first introduced by Barbirolli, to whom it is dedicated, and the Philharmonic Symphony. That it was one of the outstanding hits of the season, as the sponsors of the present set contend, is strongly disputed by the lack of critical enthusiasm with which it was greeted. Weinberger has written some ingenious but extravagant variations on a simple, plaintive tune. His final fugue is effective, but far too reminiscent of his fugue from *Schwanda* for its own good. Weinberger's *Polka and Fugue* from *Schwanda* is much more listenable and enjoyable music.

Lambert gives a more lyrical exposition of the composition than Rodzinski. In a way,

this and the better chosen breaks in the present set (the third variation and the fugue are not divided in the recording) make for better continuity. As a performance, however, Rodzinski's achieves a broader range of color and a sharper definition of dynamics, and the piano part in his version is more strikingly and persuasively played. Too, the recording in the Rodzinski set is more salient; but whether the work remains important enough to warrant a higher price for these additional features will lie with the prospective purchaser. Not being admirers of the music, we can scarcely be expected to have a preference.

P. H. R.

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LA ROCCA-McBRIDE: *Tiger Rag*; and COFFEY: *Virginia Reel*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 4465, price \$1.00.

■ Neither of these pieces was intended to be played by an orchestra of ninety instrumentalists. However, it can be admitted that both have been ingeniously arranged. The charm of Southern belles and beaux is far removed from this version of the *Virginia Reel*, and McBride's version of *Tiger Rag* just isn't the same piece that La Rocca and his Dixie Band plays. This does not mean that you might not cotton to the present arrangements, which are vigorously set forth by Mr. Fiedler and his men. Recording is good and, despite the loudness of the *Tiger Rag*, presents no problems in reproduction.

—P. G.

* * *

STOESSEL: *Suite Antique*, for two violins and chamber orchestra; played by Eddy Brown and Albert Stoessel, with Sinfonia under direction of Edgar Schenkman. Three Royale 10-inch discs, Nos. 1854/56, price 75c each.

■ One is reminded of Prokofieff's *Classical Symphony* by this little suite, for both works have much the same feeling. Stoessel is an admirable craftsman and musician, and has long contributed to the musical life of America as director of the Juilliard Graduate Opera and Orchestra Departments, conductor of the Oratorio Society of New York, and Musical Director of the Summer Concerts at Chautauqua and the Worcester Festival.

The suite is composed of a *Bourrée* and *Sarabande* (disc 1954), a *Rigaudon* and *Aria* (disc 1855), and a *Gigue* (disc 1856). On the reverse face of the last is a piece, for chamber orchestra, conducted by the composer, called *Crinoline*. It is a minuet in olden style, effectively scored.

been satisfactorily accomplished. One has the feeling that the chamber orchestra was assembled for the occasion and perhaps not rehearsed as much as the composer would have liked. Both Brown and Stoessel are able violinists, however, and their playing in the suite is competently realized. The recording is good but lacking in the essential overtones which so often lend a certain added sparkle to music of this kind. —P. G.

Concerto

HINDEMITH: *Der Schwanendreher—Concerto for Viola and Small Orchestra* (1935); played by Paul Hindemith, viola, and Arthur Fiedler's Sinfonietta. Victor set M-659, three discs, price \$6.50.

■ A *Schwanendreher*, in seventeenth-century Germany, was the man who turned the swans in the kitchen upon a spit, and there is in existence, dating from about 1600, an old mocking song directed at that worthy personage. Hindemith utilized it in the finale of the present work: hence the name of the composition, which was composed in 1935. Hindemith gives several reasons for its motivation. One of them is rather delightful—he composed *Der Schwanendreher* simply because he played his other two viola concertos too many times. Another reason was the fact that he wished to attempt a modern arrangement of old German songs in the spirit of the originals. The scoring is unconventional; to keep the viola separated from the orchestra the composer used no high strings, and, besides four cellos and three basses, only wind instruments are used.

The three movements are based on German folk songs. In the first movement Hindemith utilizes the air *Zwischen Berg und tiefem Tal* ("Twixt hill and deep valley"), interpolating it with two other themes, presumably of his own invention. Two folk tunes make up the second movement—*Num laube, Lindlein* (*Shed your leaves, little linden*) and *Der Gutzgauch auf dem Zaune sass* (*The cuckoo sat on the fence*). In the former the general impression is that of a chorale. Hindemith says that "the organ-like instrumentation for wind instruments is an attempt to revive with our technical mediums the silence [?], the balance, and the impressive clearness of the old settings in the *Liederbücher* of the sixteenth century." The final movement comprises seven variations on the *Schwanendreher* tune.

In spite of the fact that the composer expressly tried "to keep the harmonical devel-

opment in intelligible tonal roads," some determined concentration and several hearings will be necessary before the form and content become clear. It is well worth the effort, however, for the music becomes more enjoyable on each successive hearing. There is a complete mastery of form and orchestration, and the treatment, in spite of the preponderance of winds, is not too heavy. Melodically the work is typical of the composer; the intellectual element is uppermost, but it is united to a sufficiently warm emotional approach.

Hindemith's performance as a violist is good, but leaves something to be desired. He can control a warm and full tone, but there are some slipshod moments in sections requiring nimble fingering and bowing. The accompaniment supplied by Arthur Fiedler and his Sinfonietta is splendid, and the recording and surfaces rank with the best that Victor has given. —H. C. S.

LISZT-BUSONI: *Spanish Rhapsody*; played by Egon Petri, piano, and Minneapolis Symphony, dir. Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia set X-163, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ Both Petri and Mitropoulos were pupils of Busoni, so it may be assumed that the present recording is a labor of love. The inspiration (if such it may be called) of the *Spanish Rhapsody* came to Liszt during his trip to Spain in 1845. Although it antedates the *First Hungarian Rhapsody* by six years, it contains all of the elements that are found in the *Rhapsodies*: the grandiloquent opening, the national flavor, the emphasis on virtuosity, and the loose construction. In 1894 Busoni arranged the work for orchestra, and on October 22 of the same year he played it at Hamburg, Mahler conducting.

Busoni has furnished a neat and compact orchestration; it is more solid and less flashy than Liszt would have written. The piano part is followed very closely in the first half of the composition, less closely in the latter half. In the transitional sections especially Busoni saw fit to add cadenzas that sound very difficult. All of the additions, however, are in the spirit of the composer, and do not detract from the composition.

The work begins with a sample of the pompous grandeur that Liszt loved. Big, booming chords interspersed with arpeggios lead into the "Folies d'Espagne," a traditional Spanish tune. Here Liszt achieves a truly impressive climax. The same cannot be said of the remainder of the work. Beginning with the *con grazia* section the music becomes

cheap; there is the Chabrier-Rimsky-Korsakoff-Moszkowski approach—all tinsel and, as Constant Lambert would say, picture postcards of the “come-to-sunny-Spain” variety.

Of course, music like the *Spanish Rhapsody* should not be taken too seriously. It was intended, probably, as a potpourri on popular Spanish melodies, and as a virtuoso's delight. As such, Liszt achieved his goal, with Busoni converting for the extra point. Petri and Mitropoulos combine to give an energetic and, at times, brilliant performance. They throw themselves with abandon into the work and emerge with the color and melodrama that the music demands. The balance between piano and orchestra is not perfect throughout; at times the conductor's enthusiasm drowns out the pianist. Otherwise the recording is good.

—H. C. S.

* * *

MOZART: *Concerto No. 14 in E flat major*, K. 449; played by Rudolf Serkin and the Adolf Busch Chamber Players, direction Adolf Busch. Victor set M-657, three discs, price \$6.50.

■ Kathleen Long and the Boyd Neel Orchestra recorded this work several years ago for Decca (it is available in the domestic catalogue pressed on excessively noisy surfaces). The playing was competently realized but lacking in the subtlety of shading and the truer feeling for beautiful phrasing obtained in the present performance. One is reminded that Serkin's previous solo appearance on records (Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata*) lacked the spontaneity and individuality of the Fisher and Gieseking performances. Although an infallible musician, Serkin has incited greater admiration as an ensemble player. His art, as we have previously pointed out in the pages of this journal, blends perfectly with a chamber music group and an orchestra. This is borne out in the present work. In fact the evidences of his artistry revealed here make us hope that he will be heard in other concertos on records.

There is rare artistic insight in Serkin's successful effort to keep the solo instrument more expressive than brilliant here. It preserves ideally the introspective qualities of the music. The opening movement, despite its marking, is of a reflective character; as Eric Blom says, is never shows the least vivacity of spirit. There is about the whole work a reflective quality, a sort of suggestion of the “dark lady of the sonnets” behind its inspiration. Blom calls it dark and melancholy, a new and alien note in Mozart's works of this type.

This was the first of three concertos that

Mozart composed in the early Spring of 1784 (apparently for his own use); the others were the *B flat*, K. 450 (rewardingly performed on records by Elly Ney in Victor set M-365) and the *D major*, K. 451 (not recorded). Mozart confided to his father in a letter that the latter two were works “that make one perspire,” that the *B flat* was the most difficult of the two, while the *E flat* was a concerto “of quite a peculiar kind and written rather for small orchestra than a big one.” Mozart first played it at a concert in Vienna where it was accorded “extraordinary praise” — his own words. This speaks well for the Viennese audiences of the day, for this is music that grows on one and might well fail to make its full impression upon a listener in a single hearing.

It is fitting, on Mozart's own word, that this concerto has been recorded by a chamber orchestra. Both comprehending taste and musicianship are well displayed in the performance here, and the recording has been satisfyingly achieved. The surfaces of the records are smooth and quiet.

We note that an English reviewer recommends the last movement above the other two; this seems strange when we realize that the slow movement is one of the loveliest of its kind that the composer has given us, and reveals a striking profundity. It is this very movement, if one were to choose to accept the work only in part, that would be our choice (disc 15913). In the recording each of the three movements takes a single disc. It is to be hoped that those who wish this work can afford to pay the almost tripled price of this set over the other existent one; it is, to our way of thinking, really worth it.

—P. H. R.

* * *

SOLER: *Concerto in G major for harpsichord and organ*; played by Ruggiero Gerlin, harpsichord, and Noëlie Pierront, organ. Columbia disc, No. P-69842D, price \$1.50.

■ Perhaps the most striking thing we know about Fra Antonio Soler, who died in the Escorial in 1783, is that he must have been tremendously interested in instrumental colors. Among the unusual things he left us is a set of quartets for organ and strings. The present *Concerto* for harpsichord and organ is equally out of the ordinary as an instrumental combination. The explanation, no doubt, is that he was an organist and *maestro de capilla* at Lérida, and there must have been occasions when just these instruments were available. However, the fact remains that Soler showed

a real aptitude for making full use of the capabilities of each.

This *Concerto* is an ingratiating and happy little work, if hardly one of world-shaking importance. It will have more significance to the student and connoisseur of old music than it will to the casual listener, although its beauties do not lie far below the surface. There are but two movements, one on either side of the disc. The first of these is a sort of march, rather pleasantly suggestive of the C minor clavier *Fantasia* of Bach. Soler was obviously under the influence of Domenico Scarlatti, although this fact is more noticeable in the little varied quasi-minuet which is the second movement. The greatest weakness of his music, to my mind, is the short sections into which it falls, particularly the first movement. The effect is a little jerky.

The performance of M. Gerlin and Mlle. Pierront is full of gusto. The instruments have been happily placed for purposes of blending, and the tone qualities go very well together. There are some nice effects of registration on both instruments, particularly in some of the second movement variations.

—P. M.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in F major, Op. 24 (Spring Sonata)*; played by Jenő Lener (violin) and Louis Kentner (piano). Col. set M-404, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ There have been several notable alliances of artists in the performance of this work on records. Kreisler and Rupp played it for the Beethoven Violin Sonata Society (Vol. 2); other pairs are Busch and Serkin for H.M.V. and Victor (1934), Goldberg and Kraus for Parlophone (1937), and the present artists (1938). The Kreisler-Rupp version was not regarded as wholly satisfying by critics, and the Busch-Serkin was criticized both as a recording and because of Busch's tenuous and dry tone. The most ingratiating version was that of Goldberg and Kraus; it is a performance of rare artistic insight and coordination. Unfortunately the surfaces of the domestic pressing (Decca) are excessively noisy, and the delightful intimacy of the performance is hence somewhat nullified. Lener and Kentner, two sterling artists, give a sensitive and finely adjusted interpretation of this discursive mu-

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sic; their performance ranks very close to that of Goldberg and Kraus. Of the sets mentioned this has the best recording. The surfaces here are smooth and quiet.

The present work is a sheer delight from beginning to end, full of felicitous melodies and rhythmic grace. Whoever gave it the title of the *Spring Sonata* came very close to describing the character of the music. The first and last movements are full of youthful buoyancy and melodic charm, and the little scherzo is both lively and whimsical. As for the slow movement, Vincent d'Indy has aptly described it as an aria that might have escaped from some opera by Mozart.

—P. H. R.

DVORAK: *Sextet in A major, Op. 48*; played by the Budapest String Quartet, with Watson Forbes, second viola, and John Moore, second cello. Victor set M-661, four discs, price \$8.00.

■ I wonder when the unsophisticated musical public will come to realize how accessible the chamber music of Dvorak is. With a gift of almost Schubertian yet thoroughly Czechish melody, a deep sensitivity suggestive of his friend and benefactor Brahms, and a tinge of that simple melancholy which seems so often to be born into the sons of an oppressed and liberty-loving people, Dvorak has a very real message for the world today. Furthermore, his treatment of musical forms is so clear and easy to follow that I can think of no better music to use for the introduction of the layman into the mysteries of composition. The present *Sextet*, written in 1878, is a fine example. The sections of the first movement are so plainly marked that we can only wonder why the work does not sound disjointed. The simple appeal of the first theme is in such contrast to its more agitated successor that the most innocent listener could hardly miss the development. The unfolding of the *Dunka*, the elegiac slow movement, and the *Furiant*, the scherzo, is simplicity itself, and the final *Variations* are a model of this sort of thing. There Dvorak, taking a rather sombre and foreboding theme, with an especially moving cadence, does not show us his hand at the beginning, as so many composers do in this kind of movement. Obviously he learned a great deal from Brahms. And he had sense enough not to write too many variations. After putting his material five times through its paces, he concludes with a strongly contrasting finale, full of energy and color. Instead of wearing us out, he leaves us wanting more—which is an achievement not all

variation writers can boast of. I hope I have not given the impression that the *Sextet* is a work not likely to wear beyond the first few hearings. To anyone with a real love of melody this music should no more lose its appeal than that of Schubert.

A final word of gratitude is due to the Budapest Quartet and their associates, who play the work so satisfyingly, and to Victor who brings the performance to us. The opportunity most of us enjoy for hearing string sextets on the concert stage is extremely rare, and the occasions when the ensemble in such performances reaches the level of this recording are even rarer. Only through records can most of us become familiar with such works as this. Perhaps the highest praise I could give the set is that as I finish listening to it my impressions are all of Dvorak and his work. There is no jarring note either in the performance or in the recording.

—P. M.

SMETANA: *Quartet No. 1 in E minor (From My Life)* (7 sides); and TCHAIKOWSKY: *Scherzo from E Flat minor Quartet, Op. 30* (1 side); played by the Curtis String Quartet. Columbia set M-405, four discs, price \$6.00.

■ Here is another auspicious début of an American ensemble. The Curtis group, named after the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, has been heard in concert since 1929, but this is its first representation on discs. The four members of the quartet, Messrs. Brodsky, Jaffe, Aranoff and Cole, were fellow students at the conservatory, and have been associated in the performance of chamber music since 1927. Their tone is of good size and substantial in texture and their playing is at all times marked by a clean-cut style and a fine sense of rhythm. The quality of the recording is extraordinarily impressive, tonally full and opulent and realistically balanced.

There seem to be two approaches to this quartet—one that allows for resiliency and grace in the exposition of its folk-like Bohemian melodies, and the other which stresses rhythmic momentum and strength rather than tonal nuance. The latter approach is a modern one, and is the one employed by the present ensemble. It differs considerably from the playing of the Flonzaleys, who recorded the quartet for Victor in an excised version in 1929, and also from that of the Bohemian Quartet, which recorded the work for Polydor several years later. There is room for disagreement about the robust treatment

of the opening viola theme employed here, even though it may be admitted that it is not without effect. Joseph Suk, Dvorak's son-in-law, who was a member of the Bohemian Quartet, has stated that Smetana had a more romantic approach in mind. Certainly this would seem to be borne out by the notes that Smetana left us on the work! "The first movement depicts my early love of art and native music, my romantic tendency and unsatisfied yearnings." However, the marking of the movement, *allegro vivo appassionata*, may suggest a more intensified treatment than the Bohemian Quartet gave to it. The Curtis group give it a vigorous exposition.

The second movement is a Polka, which Smetana said "recalls memories of my youth." With its sharply accented rhythms it is a difficult movement to play. The third movement is a largo, which Smetana said "recalls the bliss of my first love for a girl who afterward became my wife." And the finale is an exploitation of "Bohemian national elements in music".

The work is somewhat awkwardly arranged in the recording: the first movement occupies one disc, the second a disc and a half, the third, beginning an inch from the end of side four, extends through side five and short way onto side six; and the finale carries on from there.

The playing of the Curtis ensemble in the Polka and the dance-like finale is in accord with that of the opening movement; it has direction and purpose, marked by muscular momentum rather than tonal suavity. Even in the more expressive rendition of the lovely largo the emotion is not fully persuasive. There is, however, a healthy objective quality to the playing here which may well please those who deery the sentiment in the work. As effective as the present performance of the work is, one feels that the Fionzaleys were closer to the intentions of the composer than are the present group.

The Scherzo from Tschaiakowsky's third quartet, on the last record face, is swift-paced and brilliant. The players seem to enjoy performing it.

—P. H. R.

Keyboard

ALLENDE: *Tonadas Chilenas*; and (1) LOPEZ-BUCHARDO: *Bailecito*; (2) TROIANI: *Milonga*; played by Ricardo Viñes, piano. Victor 10-inch disc 4467, price \$1.00.

■ The three little pieces that make up this record are the works of contemporary South American composers. None of the selections

are of much importance; they are conventional, though agreeable, Spanish tunes. Allende is a Chilean composer, and of his *Chilean Tunes* Viñes plays three. The second has a curiously exotic, almost Hebraic, scale. Both Lopez-Buchardo and Troiani are Argentinians; the latter is an Italian pianist-composer-teacher, who at present is associate director of the Instituto Santa Cecilia at Buenos Aires. His contribution is rhythmically more interesting than the little dance by Lopez-Buchardo. Ricardo Viñes plays all three expertly and fluently. We would like to hear him in a Spanish program that would give greater scope to his powers.

—H. C. S.

BALLANTINE: *Variations on Mary Had a Little Lamb*; played by the composer on the piano. Technichord album T-3, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ This album offers a mild and often delightful miscellany of musical satire. The composer, Edward Ballantine, an instructor at Harvard University, has taken a familiar nursery tune and written variations on it in styles of ten composers—Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Grieg, Wagner, Tschaiakowsky, MacDowell, Debussy, and Liszt.

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Some of these variations are uncanny representations of the composer in question. We suggest playing to a friend the Chopin without telling him the title. We are quite sure that he will spend an unhappy few minutes trying to figure out just what piece by Chopin it is. The same experiment could be made with several of the other variations. Some seem somewhat forced and would not permit a similar experiment. Not the least amusing feature of the variations is their titles—Mozart's *Agnelletto in C*, Schubert's *Demimoment Musical*, MacDowell's *At a Lamb*, and Debussy's *The Evening of a Lamb*.

The composer proves himself to be an astonishingly competent pianist, and deserves to be heard in other works. We recommend this album to those who like musical humor. The recording has been excellently contrived.

—P. G.

CHOPIN: *Mazurkas* (Vol. 2)—*Op. 24, No. 4; Op. 30, No. 4; Op. 33, Nos. 2-4; Op. 41, Nos. 1 and 3; Op. 50, Nos. 1-3; Op. 56, No. 1; Op. 63, Nos. 1-3; Op. 68, No. 4; played by Arthur Rubinstein, piano. Victor set M-656, five discs, price \$10.00.*

■ The first volume of mazurkas that Victor released in January illustrated one side of the many-faceted dances. The present album reveals another. Roughly speaking, the *Mazurkas* can be divided into three classes—early, mature, and posthumous. In the early works there are poetry, tenderness, and nostalgia in miniature; the forms are slender and, as a general rule, compact. With *Op. 24, No. 4* the mature period is well launched. Poetry and nostalgia remain, but there is a more rugged and at times brooding quality. The forms are larger, and there is more intense emotional impact. Three of these mazurkas are among the greatest things Chopin ever wrote; these three are all in C-sharp minor: *Op. 30, No. 4, Op. 41, No. 1, and Op. 50, No. 3*. Among the posthumous mazurkas there is little of outstanding interest, although a morbid interest is centered on *Op. 68, No. 4*, which is reputed to be the last composition that the composer penned.

Compositions of Chopin's maturity largely comprise the present album. It begins with the lovely *B-flat minor Mazurka* of which Huneker wrote rhapsodically, and proceeds to the big, enigmatic works of *Opp. 30, 41, and 50*. It is there that the essence of Chopin is found. Listening to them, one is conscious of infinitely more than Polish dances. The daring harmonies, the wealth of melody, and

the melancholy mood underlying nearly all make them the very quintessence of romanticism.

Rubinstein's performance has been commented upon in the review of the first volume, and he does nothing to make one alter that favorable impression. There is the same clean-cut, vigorous pianism, the same polished and poised approach, and the usual good taste. As in the previous set, he seems more in sympathy with certain works than with others. His playing is always praiseworthy, however, and special mention must be made of his invigorating performance of the magical *Op. 41, No. 1*. Also noteworthy is his treatment of *Op. 33, No. 4* (which, incidentally, is slightly cut).

One feature keeps the set from being as enjoyable as it should be. The surface noise is greater than one usually encounters in present-day recording, and is really annoying at times. Otherwise the album is an absolute "must" for all music lovers.

DEBUSSY: *Pagodes* and *L'Île Joyeuse*; played by Walter Gieseking, piano. Columbia disc 69841-D, price \$1.50.

■ These works were written at the height of Debussy's creative powers. *Pagodes*, from *Estampes*, was written in 1903, and *L'Île Joyeuse* was published the following year. Of the former Oscar Thompson writes that it "employs systematically the five-note scale assumed to have been brought to Debussy's attention by Javanese and Cambodian musicians at the Paris exposition in 1889 . . . In the music of the time, here was a new type of exoticism."

L'Île Joyeuse is one of the most exciting and glorious works Debussy ever composed. It is a musical impression of Watteau's *Embarquement pour Cythere*; indeed, I feel that it is more suggestive, subtle, and alluring than the canvas of the French master. The composer here let not only his imagination run wild but also his fingers, and there are transcendent pianistic effects that would have made Liszt nod in approval. The outburst of chords towards the end, and the glittering finger work earlier in the composition are outstandingly and unblushingly virtuosic—a trait relatively rare in Debussy.

Gieseking's performance is perfect. Technical difficulties appear to be non-existent to him, and he dashes off the conclusion in a burst of rapture. In the *Pagodes* his pedaling, phrasing, and obvious sympathy for the music make it the best recorded performance existent.

—H. C. S.

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GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue*: played by Clifford Herzer and Jascha Zayde, duopianists. Royale 10-inch discs 1861/2; price 75c each.

■ We can always stand another recording of the *Rhapsody in Blue*, especially when it is done as well as the present version. The music seems to hold up very nicely through the years, and is still good for a healthy assortment of thrills. Herzer and Zayde perform in their usual competent and thorough way. Unfortunately, they have to compete with the version played by José and Amparo Iturbi (Victor set M-517). That album, issued about a year and a half ago, still remains about the last word on the music. The Iturbis play their own arrangement, which is more colorful than the present one, and enter with amazing gusto into the spirit of the music. However, while Herzer and Zayde do not possess the subtleness of the Iturbis, theirs is a rattling good performance. By means of a few minor cuts, they compress the music onto two 10-inch discs. The recording is very good throughout, and the price, compared with that of the Victor album, should tempt anyone who likes music of this kind. —H. C. S.

* * *

SAINT-SAËNS: *Le Déluge-Prelude*: played by Charles M. Courboin on the organ of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York. Victor disc, No. 15946, price \$2.00.

■ Saint-Saëns musical picture of the Great Flood is, like his *Samson et Dalila*, something between an opera and an oratorio. The work, which is a setting of a text by Louis Gallet, made its appearance in 1875, and is Opus 45 in the list of the prolific composer's output. Today it is remembered by its *Prelude*, which in its original orchestral dress contains a violin solo so lush and appealing that it has become a part of the well-equipped violinist's repertoire. In its organ reduction the *Prelude* is equally effective and idiomatic, and it often figures thus on recital programs. Oddly, it seems not have been recorded in this medium before. The first record side consists mainly of a restless and sombre fugue, while the second is given over principally to the popular melody referred to above. Thus the scholarly and the frankly pleasing come together in the music of Saint-Saëns.

It is a pleasure to be able at last to praise a Courboin record unreservedly. The noted organist has done well to leave the monster Wanamaker organ in favor of the less impos-

ing instrument of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. With all the interest which recent recordings have aroused in the baroque organ, and the resulting controversy about the advantages and disadvantages of old instruments and copies of old instruments, it is pleasant to hear this example of a good modern organ reproduced so satisfactorily. —P. M.

Instrumental

DINICU-HEIFETZ: *Hora Staccato*; and MENDELSSOHN-KREISLER: *May Breezes, Op. 62, No. 1 (Song Without Words)*; played by Mischa Elman (violin) with Vladimir Padwa at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 2064, price \$1.50.

■ That spicy little Roumanian Gypsy piece, which Heifetz arranged and introduced to the American public, has become one of the most popular encore pieces ever written for the violin. Why Elman should have seen fit to duplicate this composition after Heifetz's scintillating performance of it we cannot imagine; he does not make it nearly as exciting. And his playing in the Mendelssohn-Kreisler piece is somewhat on the saccharine side. The recording is good. —P. G.

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GRANDJANY: *Rapsodie*; played by Marcel Grandjany (harp). Victor 10-inch disc, No. 2060, price \$1.50.

■ The repertoire of interesting harp music is, as everyone knows, a very limited affair. It is therefore easily understandable that Marcel Grandjany, one of the finest harpists practising today, should be giving a good deal of his time to composition. And he has been successful enough in his creative activities to gain a hearing for two of his works for harp and organ at the recent Coolidge Festival in the Library of Congress. Consequently, since he is in the news at present, the release of this disc is timely. One fact is so obvious that it is hardly necessary to mention it here—namely that Mr. Grandjany knows how to write for the harp as well as to play it. The *Rapsodie* is full of effects as well as of atmosphere. The modal melody produces at once a feeling of other days and distant countries, and this feeling persists to the end. There is nothing strikingly original in the content or design of the music—it is novel chiefly because it is played on the harp, and because it was obviously intended to be played on the harp. To sum up, Mr. Grandjany's *Rapsodie* is a pleasant and effective work, worthwhile for anyone who appreciates good workmanship and attractive color, but indispensable only to lovers of the artist's instrument. The recording is the richest and the most natural harp reproduction I have heard. —P. M.

PISTON: *Suite for Oboe and Piano*—1933; played by Louis Speyer (oboe) and the Composer. Technichord disc No. T-1561, price \$1.50.

■ Those who liked Piston's *String Quartet No. 1* (reviewed in the December, 1939 issue) will undoubtedly admire this work. Like the quartet this suite is reminiscent of Stravinsky and his neo-classicism, yet it is not derivative music. Again it is Piston's rhythmic energy in the quicker movements that favorably engages our attention; and once more we are reminded that the composer is a resourceful craftsman. However, Piston's resourcefulness stems more from the head than the heart. The suite contains a prelude, sarabande, minuetto, nocturne, and gigue. It is excellently played and recorded. —P. G.

Voice

BENEDICT: *Il Carnevale di Venezia*; sung by Lina Pagliughi, soprano, with flute obbligato by John Amadio, and piano accom-

paniment by Nils Nelson. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 2061, price \$1.50.

■ Lina Pagliughi, I am told, is a native of Brooklyn. She has spent some years in Italy, where she has been a protégée of Tetrizzini, and has been hailed by that great lady as her logical successor. All of which is easy to understand as we listen to her first Victor record. The voice is surely one of the best of its kind in the world today—it has brilliancy, purity, fluency and rather exceptional cleanness. One misses the spark which made the Tetrizzini singing the breath-taking thing it was, but there are many of the Tetrizzini tricks in Miss Pagliughi's performance. Certainly she has come as near as any human being can to the exact imitation of another voice and style. There is a trill, for example, begun slowly and gradually increased in speed, quite after the manner of her distinguished predecessor. There is also a descending chromatic run which lacks only the super-brilliance of its model. And there are full-throated high E-flats which have electrifying quality. For her treatment of really rapid passage work we will have to wait for her second recording, since the Benedict variations as she presents them here are surprisingly lacking in dazzling fireworks. They are rather designed to show attributes which are far rarer in a coloratura singer—the ability to sustain a *cantilena* and to skip about among the registers without loss of quality. One striking effect in the second half of the performance is the credible imitation of the voice by the flute. This sort of thing could hardly have been better done in any generation.

I suspect that the composition is longer than Miss Pagliughi's version of it, although on this point I am not sure. Both Tetrizzini and Toti Dal Monte made double-sided twelve-inch recordings of it, but I am not familiar with them. As far as the rewards of the music go, I personally am quite content with the length of this ten-inch disc. Aside from a few "beat notes" in the final cadenza for voice and flute, the recording is clarity itself.

DI CHIARA: *La Spagnola*; and GREVER: *Alma mia*; sung by Carlo Morelli (baritone) with orchestra. Columbia 10-inch disc, No. 17192D, price \$1.00.

■ Carlo Morelli, who appears for the first time on the lists, is one of the better Italianate baritones of the Metropolitan Opera. He is, furthermore, a brother of the late Renato Zanelli, who himself qualified for the same description some twenty years ago. Zanelli,

of course, subsequently became a heroic tenor, and made a considerable reputation in the title role of Verdi's *Otello*, though he did not live long enough to return to America and sing it here. For the curious, Zanelli recorded both as a baritone (in the old acoustic era) and as a tenor. The early discs, as I remember them, disclose a voice very like that of his brother, and a style not strikingly different. There is not much of subtilty here, but plenty of smoothness and good open Italian quality. *La Spagnola* to me is the more appealing of the songs, and its frankly barrel-organ swing must be pleasantly familiar to most of us. *Alma Mia* is an out-and-out sentimental Spanish song, with a thematic resemblance to an even more sentimental American one. Morelli, a Chilean by birth, avoids the usual Latin exaggerations, and to some extent saves the song by his robust and clean singing. The recording is quite big.

GIORDANO: *Fedora—Amor ti viciata*; and Puccini: *Tosca—E lucevan le stelle*; sung by Richard Crooks (tenor) with orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 2063, price \$1.50.

■ This is by far the best recording of Mr. Crooks' singing I have heard—though I cannot claim to have listened to all that he has made. The singing here is free, big and healthy, sufficiently warm to be Italian, yet without the distortions traditional to Italian singers. I doubt if the buyer who wants these particular selections will find them better sung on any other disc. The *Tosca* air, of course, must be available in a recording of nearly any tenor the purchaser may happen to prefer, but the effectively expansive arioso from *Fedora* (about the only musical thing one remembers from that opera) is a welcome change from the usual couplings. Only one word of warning is necessary: the recording is extremely heavy and brilliant (especially in *Amor ti viciata*) and may quite possibly prove too much for old fashioned machines.

GRETCHANINOFF: *The Captive, Op. 20, No. 4*; MALASHKIN: *Oh, could I but express in song*; and STRAVINSKY: *Tilim-Bom (Histoire pour enfants, No. 1)*; sung by Alexander Kipnis, basso, with piano accompaniments by Celius Dougherty. Victor disc, No. 15894, price \$2.00.

■ Kipnis' reputation as a lieder and Wagner singer has somewhat obscured the fact that he is at his best in the interpretation of the songs of his own people—in fact, of all the

singers before the public today he seems the best fitted to carry on the traditions of the great Chaliapin. And if his singing in German has frequently been marred by certain lingual mannerisms, there are no blots of that kind on the present record. The voice is magnificent, and the art equally so.

The Gretchaninoff song is a setting of a poem by Pushkin, supposedly the meditation of a prisoner as he gazes out of his cell. This poem was also set by Rubinstein, whose excellent song has been recorded by Chaliapin (Victor 15236). The two records make a fascinating comparison, for both songs are superbly sung, and both are big and gripping compositions. The Gretchaninoff is the more tense and concentrated, building steadily and inexorably to a magnificent climax.

Oh could I but express in song was a favorite with Chaliapin and his audiences, and it is a great pity that the only electrical recording of it he left us was sung in English. In any case I believe that disc is out of print, and therefore the Kipnis version fills a definite gap. The present singer is a bit more careful in his delivery than was his famous predecessor, and he sings the haunting melody with less elasticity and abandon. The little Stravinsky children's song is a naive description of the general rush to follow a fire bell. After the intense passion of the Malashkin, the light-

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ness of Kipnis' singing here is effectively surprising. The recording of the voice is excellent, and of course Mr. Dougherty's accompaniments are models of their kind, but the balance here is a shade less perfect than in the last Kipnis-Dougherty disc.

NEGRO SPIRITUAL: *Where you there?*; **CZECHOSLOVAKIAN FOLKSONG:** *Song of Bohemia*; **SCHUBERT:** *Mass for men's voices: Introit and Sanctus*; and **ABT:** *Ave Maria*; sung by The Hamilton College Choir, conducted by Prof. Paul A. Fanchet. Two 10-inch Royale discs, Nos 1863-64, price 75c each.

■ College glee club recordings are apt to be more interesting to the families and friends of the participants than to the general public, and these two discs are hardly an exception to the rule. They do, however, present some previously unrecorded music, and for that reason they are entitled to a more careful hearing than most others of their type.

The noble spiritual, *Where you there?*, has come to us within the last year or so in the Burleigh arrangement by Marian Anderson, and also in Roland Hayes' distinctly personal unaccompanied version. This glee club performance just about completes the cycle; unless we are to have it from a genuine colored church choir, there can hardly be anything more to say on the subject. The rendering here is typical of its kind—even to the whole tone drop in pitch. The Czechoslovakian folksong is also given a genuinely glee club performance, this time with piano accompaniment. The Schubert selections are more interesting, although I can hardly call them great examples of the composer's work, and the Abt *Ave Maria* (not the very famous one by the same composer) is characteristic of this definitely minor choral conductor-composer. Generally the singing is good; there is excellent tone quality. The diction is not at all times clear, but surely as good as that of most choirs of this kind. Stylistically the music is inclined to be drawn out beyond the limits of good phrasing—but this also is in the best glee club tradition. It is unfortunate that the piano was used to give the pitch between the two unaccompanied Schubert selections—this could have been tuned out by the recording controls.

PAXSON: *Dodo* (based on a folksong of the *Pyrañces*); and **GAINES:** *Song o' the Lass*; sung by Kathryn Meisle, contralto, with piano accompaniment by Stuart Ross. Columbia 10-inch disc, No. 17190D, price \$1.00.

■ It seems not a little surprising that so

natural a recording voice as that of Kathryn Meisle should have been allowed so long a vacation from the studios. Apparently now she is going to make up for lost time, as she is among the several prominent artists recently signed up by Columbia. Her new debut is rather a promising than a triumphant one, since the songs she has chosen are pleasant rather than important. *Dodo* is a little lullaby arranged from a folksong, and, like most melodies arranged in this manner, it has been pretty well transformed in the process. It is not without charm, and is very nicely sung by Miss Meisle. *Song o' the Lass* is a Scotch ballad of the type very popular a number of years ago. While not in any way superior to a great many others of its kind, it also is effective. Aside from a high note or two this song benefits greatly from the quality of the Meisle voice. The accompaniments are ably played, but recorded just a little too far in the background.

SCARLATTI: *Son tutta duolo*; and *Le violette*; sung by Tito Schipa, tenor, with orchestra.

Victor 10-inch disc, No. 2062, price \$1.50.

■ Here are two well known songs by Alessandro Scarlatti, the great composer of vocal music, and father of Domenico who specialized in keyboard instruments. The first is a love lament, and in the second the poet compares his own futile ambitions to the simplicity of the violet. Both are charming songs, and worthy additions to any rounded collection. However, I must confess that I do not find Schipa's recording completely satisfactory. The effect of the singing is a little heavy and unsuited. One reason for this is the orchestration of the accompaniments, which would have sounded better on a piano or a harpsichord—or even a string quartet. Then, although the ever admirable tenor sings tastefully and well, I am a little too conscious of the act of his singing, and not enough of the meaning of the songs. This is due, in part at least, to the too close microphone placement. Obviously Schipa's voice is not what it was a decade ago; therefore it is his fine artistry which should be accented rather than the sound he makes.

STRAUSS: *Daphne: Excerpts*; sung by Margarete Teschemacher, soprano, and Torsten Ralf, tenor, with the Saxon State Orchestra, Karl Böhm, conductor. Victor set M-660, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ It is fashionable today, whenever a recent work of Richard Strauss is mentioned, to sigh and remark sadly that the old man was played

The playing of the suite and the minuet has out long ago, and that all the music he has given the world in the last twenty years has been nothing but unnecessary repetition of his earlier works. It is indeed difficult to listen to a new composition of his purely for its own qualities and content, for we cannot deny that the Strauss style has remained pretty constant through the changing years. Yet like any other great composer—and Strauss is a great composer—he is entitled to a hearing, and surely at his second best he can hold up his head in the presence of many a revived work of some acknowledged master of the past.

Daphne (or these samples of it) is full of reminders, however new its message or its thematic material may be. Of course it is not quite safe to judge the hour-and-forty-minute opera too critically on the strength of about fifteen minutes of it, since the effectiveness of the play must of necessity have a bearing on the music's power. Nevertheless, it is probably fair to take these three excerpts as representative of the general musical style. The first two record sides are given over to the transformation of *Daphne* into a laurel branch, the third is the heroine's address to a tree beside which she has grown up, and the fourth is Apollo's lament over his own wickedness in killing Leukippos, his rival for the love of *Daphne*.

Whatever we may feel about the inspiration of this music, we cannot deny the continued effectiveness of Strauss' harmonic and orchestral skill. He still remains the greatest sheer virtuoso among modern composers, for everything he writes *sounds* gloriously. The orchestra takes on at his hands any color his imagination desires. He can make it seethe with fire or passion, or he can command it to carry us, as it does here, to the leafy tops of the trees. Only when we recollect that we have been carried around by it before do we refuse to surrender completely to the charm of this music. The vocal writing, too, is the work of the old Strauss. *Salomé* and *Electra* sang in much the same manner as does *Daphne*; the latest heroine, therefore, does not emerge from these recordings with a true individuality. Of course similar things were written and said about *Arabella* when that opera was produced several years ago, but *Arabella* (judging again from recorded excerpts) had a simple and eloquent appeal which I do not find in *Daphne*. Here the emphasis is on the heroic rather than the human side of the story.

These records, of course, have a documenta-

ry value, for they bring us the music just as it was heard at its première in Dresden, Oct. 15 1938. Mme. Teschemacher was a fine choice to create the part of *Daphne*, for she possesses one of the finest dramatic voices in German opera today. The big style of this music suits her better than that of the more maidenly *Eva* in Victor's recent *Meistersinger* set. Torsten Ralf is definitely a superior German tenor, although hardly an ideal one, and he is at his best here. He has the necessary volume and plenty of declamatory power. Both he and Mme. Teschemacher have mastered the difficult *tessitura* as well as the style of this music. And Strauss must surely have been pleased with the eloquent playing of the Saxon State Orchestra under the sure hand of Karl Böhm. The reproduction also is splendid.

* * *

TRENET: *Les enfants s'ennuient le Dimanche*; and *Vous oubliez votre cheval*; sung by Charles Trenet (tenor) with orchestra. Columbia 10-inch disc, No. 429M, price \$.75.

■ Every since the release about a year ago of *Boum* (Columbia 408M), I have counted myself among the admirers of Charles Trenet. The new disc of this French film star is up to his standard of spirit and appeal, and I am sure its public is waiting for it. The use of a harpsichord in the accompaniment of *Les enfants s'ennuient le Dimanche* is particularly happy with the doleful and slightly old-fashioned tune. On this side of the disc the words are easy to follow, but in the more complicated *Vous oubliez votre cheval* the listener's French must be more than reasonably good. For all that, the disc might well be used by language teachers as a fine example of French diction. The recording is in

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every way excellent. But just how does this deep and rich voice come to be labeled as a tenor?

—P. M.

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VERDI: *Rigoletto*: *Questa o quella*; and *La donna è mobile*: sung by Nino Martini, tenor, with orchestra. Columbia 10-inch disc, No. 17191D, price \$1.00.

■ The two popular *Rigoletto* songs are definitely star material, and everyone who wants them at all will prefer to have his favorite tenor singing them. Mr. Martini surely has a following large enough to make his recording profitable. The tenor is in excellent form for his Columbia debut, dashing off the character-revealing pronouncements of the Duke with finest Italian swagger. There are a couple of high notes in *La donna è mobile* which he does not quite succeed in topping, but in all other respects he maintains the best traditions. The voice has been made to sound bigger than it does in real life, but in the amplification process the quality remains mercifully undistorted. The recording is spacious, and the balance with the orchestra is good.

—P. M.

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DVORAK-FISHER: *Goin' Home*; and ENGLISH BALLAD: *The Bailiff's Daughter*: sung by Lawrence Tibbett, with orchestra in the first, and with piano in the second. Victor disc 15549, price \$2.00.

■ This disc was reviewed by Mr. Miller in our November, 1939 issue. For some reason it was found necessary to withdraw it for a time, and it is now re-issued. Mr. Tibbett sings in his best voice and familiar style in both selections. Those interested in a vocal version of the familiar *Largo* by Dvorak will find this one completely satisfying. The recording of both pieces is good, and the surfaces are satisfactory. Originally the surface on *The Bailiff's Daughter* was very noisy, which may have been the reason for the withdrawal of the disc.

—P. G.

* * *

ROBINSON: *Ballad for Americans*: sung by Paul Robeson, with chorus and orchestra, conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret. Victor album P-20, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

■ First heard on a "Pursuit of Happiness" broadcast last Fall, this provocative patriotic ballad, written by John Latouche and Earl Robinson, made such a hit that the Columbia Broadcasting Co. was obliged to rebroadcast it on New Year's day. The work is a panor-

amic song of American history. It makes no pretense at being artistic. As a matter of fact neither the text nor the music has any distinction. Its aim is an expression of the "spirit and character and philosophy of the heterogeneous American people." The piece combines folk feeling with zestful ballyhoo in its tribute to the American spirit and the American way. As a work for the theater it is a "natural," and one can well realize the punch it would have before a crowd of people. As a recording, *Ballad for Americans* is only slightly less effective. It may appeal to collectors as an example of recorded Americana.

No small part of the success of this work both in the broadcasts and on the records belongs to Paul Robeson; he brings the right spirit to it and sings with conviction. The recording has been effectively contrived.

—P. G.

Novelty

AMERICANA IN VERSE, Vol. 1—Ogden Nash and Newman Levy; by the Koralites. Victor set P-16, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ The Koralites comprise three men and three women with a flair for deft characterization, a good sense of drama, and a regard for diction. The humorous verse of Nash and Newman fares very well with their collective treatment, and it all makes for a bit of enlivening fun. There are three verses by Nash on the first disc (26489): *Coffee with the Meal*, *Lucy Lake* (our favorite—how many Lucy Lakes we've known and wanted to dispose of), and *Pari-Mutuels*. The second disc (26490) contains Nash's *Mrs. Marmaduke Moore* and Levy's *Thais*. The third disc (26491) has Levy's *Rain* and Nash's *The Strange Case of the Pleasing Taxi-Driver*. The album is especially recommended for parties. Mechanically the records are quite satisfactory. —P. G.

A Mother's Day Package

■ Victor has put up a package resembling an old fashioned valentine with a card marked "For Mother" on it, containing three ten-inch discs, as a Mother's Day feature. The selections are: *To My Mother*, a sentimental ballad by Robert MacGimsey, and *Annie Laurie*, both sung by John Charles Thomas (disc 1977, price \$1.50); *Intermezzo* from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, coupled with *Song of India* from Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Sadko* (disc 4303, price \$1.00); and Ketelbey's *In a Persian Market* (disc 4338, price \$1.00), both of the latter discs played by Fiedler and the

Boston "Pops" Orchestra. Whether one would be permitted to select any other discs to replace these in the package, we cannot say, but possibly such an arrangement could be made with your dealer. It seems to us that Victor somewhat underestimates the taste of the average American mother; certainly the preposterously sentimental song, *To My Mother*, is a painful affair that might better have been forgotten. Even the Whistler type of mother would rebel against its treacle. But maybe we are wrong!

Chamber Music Addition

PAGANINI: *Grand Quartet in E major* played by the York String Quartet. Royale discs 586/88, price \$3.00.

■ Paganini wrote three "Grand Quartets" for violin, viola, guitar and cello. Having a fondness for the guitar, he unquestionably included that instrument not only for definite effects but to provide a new and piquant tone-color. The rearrangement of the quartet to include a second violin instead of a guitar removes an element of novelty badly needed in this music. When one considers that these works were written in Beethoven's time, some of whose more advanced quartets had already appeared, one cannot believe that Paganini intended that Grand Quartets to be regarded as chamber music *per se*. As a matter of fact they fall into the salon genre, and resemble the sort of music one hears played in restaurants in Italy. Paganini has given evidence of originality in musical composition, notably in his caprices for violin; but here he shows a lack of originality coupled with a tendency towards sheer banality and repetitiousness. Mozart, Schubert, Rossini—Paganini evidently knew and admired genius—are all blithely and unabashedly rewritten.

The quartet is divided into four movements—an opening allegro, a minuet, an adagio, and a final rondo. Both the first and last movements could have been advantageously excised. Not only are the melodic repetitions tiresome but so too is the repeated use of similar cadences. Obviously the minuet was written with the guitar in mind; and one feels that the pizzicati would have been far more effective on that instrument. There is a curious resemblance to Brahms' *Vergebliches Ständchen* in the opening theme of the minuet. The adagio recalls the slow movement of Paganini's *D major Concerto*. The whole work is one long solo for the first violin, and suggests that Paganini wrote it for his own amusement and use. Max Polikoff, the first violinist of the York Quartet, does fine justice to the main

line of the music throughout, maintaining a consistently smooth and songful tone. The recording is good, and the record surfaces smooth.

—P. H. R.

IN THE POPULAR VEIN

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*Jack the Bear*, and *Morning Glory*. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. Victor 26536.

● This is the first Ellington release on his new contract for Victor and a highly auspicious start it is, too. It seems a bad thing for an artist to remain too long with one company. He comes in time to be taken for granted. This, we fear, was the case with Ellington and Columbia. It is more or less in the nature of things that this should be so; no criticism of Columbia is implied in the statement. In any case, we feel that a shift to Victor at this time is a highly beneficial one for the Duke and it is pleasant to see one's notions verified by as superb a recording as this one. By and large, Ellington's finest recordings throughout his career have been for Victor and it may confidently be assumed that the coming months will result in some of the best discs he has yet given us. And if this is a sample, it is almost certain to be so.

AAAA—*Let's All Sing Together*, and *Board Meeting*. Benny Goodman and his Orchestra. Columbia 35396.

● The constantly improving Goodman unit is heard to as good advantage here as in any disc of recent months. More and more the conviction grows that this is the finest band that Goodman has yet assembled. There are fewer prima donnas in it than in Goodman bands of the past, to be sure, but this may account for the superior homogeneity of this group to last year's or that of the year before. At any rate, it is clicking as well as any band we have ever heard and these two sides are excellent examples of the kind of work it is doing.

AAA—*Adios, Mariquita Linda*, and *Frenesi*. Artie Shaw and his Orchestra. Victor 26542.

● What with getting married to Lana Turner and organizing a thirty-one piece band, Artie Shaw has busy indeed the last month or so. This disc is the first result of the latter enterprise to appear and those who have breathlessly been awaiting something mildly revolutionary in the dance music racket will be somewhat disappointed, I fear. Quite in keeping with Shaw's openly expressed and blatantly publicized revulsion to the jitterbug aspect of swing, he has certainly gotten as far away from it as imaginable in these recordings. On the basis of two currently popular Mexican tunes, he has built arrangements which might almost be termed fourth-rate Kostelanetz, were it not for occasional flashes now and then of something which may in time develop into the type of super-swing which Shaw is obviously aiming at. His own clarinet work is, of course, incomparable, but the work as a whole is at present too inconclusive to justify either sweeping praise or condemnation.

AAA—*Say It, and My! My!* Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26555.

● Any listing of really top-notch American tune writers could not fail to include the name of Jimmy McHugh. From the memorable score for the first *Blackbirds* down to the present, his record of song hits is as impressive as anyone's, even though he is no seeker of the limelight like so many of his less talented confreres. These two numbers are from the Paramount film *Buck Benny Rides Again*, and have that solid, substantial quality written all over them which bespeaks big-hittom. They are, as well, the type of numbers which Dorsey does particularly handsomely with, which makes this a disc with the highest possible commercial rating.

AAA—*They Didn't Believe Me*, and *Just One of Those Things*. Ted Streater and his Orchestra. Columbia 35430.

● A grand pair of tunes in super-smoothie arrangements by the top-flight society band of them all, now in its second season at the fantastically snooty Monte Carlo. A really excellent band, built around the elegant pianistics of its arranger and leader, Ted Streater, it is an ideal group for current show tunes and the best of the old-timers, like these two.

AAA—*Dinah*, and *Singin' the Blues*. Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra. Victor 26557.

● A frenetic performance of *Dinah* in the best Hampton manner, but with surprisingly little of Hampton in it. There are, instead, excellent solos by Coleman Hawkins, who here turns in some highly creditable work which is particularly pleasant to hear after some of the embarrassingly bad work he has recently done on records; also some fine trumpet work by that greatest double-threat man in music, Benny Carter.

AAA—*Siboney*, and *I Want My Mama*. Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra. Victor 26522.

● There has never been a really first-rate recording of what is probably the most popular of all rumbas, *Siboney*, until now. How Cugat escaped recording it long before this we do not know, but this version of it was well worth waiting for. An attractive backing is that most popular of Brazilian zambas, *Mamae eu Quero*. Englished into a reasonably literal *I Want My Mama*. The Brazilian infiltration, due principally to one human bombshell in the person of Carmen Miranda, is incidentally the most important foreign trend of recent years and may in time rival the enormous and long-lived popularity of the Cuban rhythms in this country.

AAA—*I Walk With Music*, and *Irene*. Johnny Green and his Orchestra. Royale 1848.

● About the last thing the producers of *Three After Three* did before closing it up altogether was to add to its already brilliant score what would probably have been its hit tune, *I Walk With Music*. Green does the thoroughly competent job that might reasonably be expected of him on a tune of the sort, and a sparkling performance of *Irene*, from the forthcoming film version of the old musical, provides a suitable coupling.

AA—*Woodpecker Song*, and *I'm Stepping Out With a Memory Tonight*. Kate Smith. Columbia 35398.

● *Woodpecker Song*, based on a currently popular Italian tune, *Reginella Campagnola*, is now in the process of sweeping the country, so it is only fair that Kate Smith, who introduced it in America and virtually popularized it, should provide the definitive version of it on discs. It's a spunky little tune, a sort of successor to *Beer Barrel Polka*, and a refreshing contrast to the average home-grown product.

AA—*From Another World*, and *It Never Entered My Mind*. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26534.

● Rather soggy jobs on the two best tunes of the current Rodgers and Hart musical, *Higher and Higher*. *It Never Entered My Mind*, being more of a torch number than a conventional show number, is the better of the two, but the lovely *From Another World* bogs down completely under the heavy-handed ministrations of Prof. Clinton.

* * *

STRAUSS WALTZES—*Blue Danube* and *Wiener Blut Waltzes* (disc 35416); *Southern Roses* and *Wine, Women, and Song Waltzes* (disc 35417); *Tales from the Vienna Woods* and *Voices of Spring* (disc 35418); and *Emperor Waltz* and *Artist's Life* (disc 35419); played by Al Goodman and his Orchestra. Columbia set C-13, price \$2.50.

● Columbia calls this an *Invitation to the Dance*. Of all the dance versions of Johann Strauss Waltzes that have appeared on records, these are by far the best; they are much better than the ones made by Harry Horlick and his Orchestra for Decca not only as performances but as recordings.

Satire

THE DWIGHT FISKE ALBUM. Liberty Music Shops Release, four discs, price \$5.50.

● These are the first Dwight Fiske records in some years, and those who find his mildly wicked ditties amusing (not everyone does) will welcome these like old friends. The enunciation is considerably better here than in many of his earlier recordings, and they are, we think, as amusing as any of them.

OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDINGS OF MERIT

(The following are rated from quality of performance regardless of record quality.)

AAA—*Among My Souvenirs*, and *Fish Fry*. Benny Carter and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5458.

AAA—*From Another World*, and *Over the Waves*. Bob Crosby and his Orchestra. Decca 3091.

AAA—*The Rumba Jumps*, and *I'll Never Smile Again*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10673.

AAA—*A Lover's Lullaby*, and *You're Got Me Voodoo'd*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10662.

AAA—*No Name Jive* (Parts 1 and 2). Glen Gray and The Casa Loma Orchestra. Decca 3089.

AAA—*Am I Blue?* and *Ridin' the Subways*. Teddy Powell and his Orchestra. Decca 3094.

AAA—*I'll Come Back For More*, and *"Fat Stuff" Serenade*. Rex Stewart and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5448.

AAA—*Gabriel Meets the Duke*, and *Whispering Grass*. Erskine Hawkins and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10671.

AA—*Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues*. Earl Hines and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10674.

AA—*Boog It*, and *Chop Chop Charlie Chan*. Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5444.

AA—*Ho Sa Bonnie*, and *Johnson Rag*. The Merry Macs. Decca 3088.

AA—*I'm Through With Love*, and *Something to Remember You By*. Ziggy Elman and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10663.

AA—*Cheatin' On Me*, and *Oh Frenchy*. "Fats" Waller and his Rhythm. Bluebird B-10658.

AA—*Blue Ink*, and *Can This Be Love*. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3081.

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